

Human Resource Management practices and performance of employees in the selected Local Governments in Eastern Uganda

Taibu Azah¹, Wilfred Tarabinah² and David Adeyemo³
^{1, 2, 3} *Kampala International University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
P. O. Box 20000, Kampala, Uganda*

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on employee performance within selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. The study employed a quantitative approach, utilizing descriptive, survey, and cross-sectional designs on a sample of 336 respondents. The research revealed a positive and significant association between HRM practices and employee performance ($r = 0.501$, $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$). This implies that enhancing HRM practices can lead to improved employee performance in the region. Regression analysis indicated that approximately 42.1% of the variability in employee performance can be attributed to variations in HRM practices. The association was highly significant ($\text{Sig.} < 0.05$), and the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 42.775$). Specifically, for every one-unit increase in HRM practices, employee performance is expected to increase by approximately 0.613 units. Based on these findings, the study recommends the following: Invest in HR Practices: Local governments in Eastern Uganda should prioritize effective HR practices, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and employee development; Training and Development: Implement regular training programs to enhance employees' skills and competencies; and Performance Appraisal Systems: Establish robust performance appraisal systems to provide constructive feedback.

Key Words: Human Resource Management Practices; Employee Performance; Local Governments; Eastern Uganda

1. Introduction

In Uganda, local governments and development partners have made an effort to apply good human resource management practices to improve employee performance within the district councils. Several training programmes were undertaken annually; the reward system had been gradually improved and staff appraisals were carried out (MoLG 2010). To make the delivery of services more effective and efficient, the Government of Uganda introduced the Results Oriented Management (ROM). Under ROM, all public administration and management emphasized achieving well-defined results (MoLG 2010).

Despite these endeavors, widespread dissatisfaction on the performance of local governments were still rampant. For instance, Muya (2015) and Abdulkadir & Yawson (2017) explained that poor HRM practice implementation appeared to be a major contributing factor to poor service delivery. Concerns regarding how tasks were being executed, limited resources, insufficient institutional capacity, corruption, and political intervention at the local level and the ability of local governments' employees to effectively deliver services were raised (Kakuru, 2019, Owino, 2018, Mutakha, 2017 and Jean et al 2010).

It is important to note that, despite immense literature about poor service delivery in Uganda, there is not so much information about staff performance in Local Governments in Eastern Uganda. Nonetheless, the breadth of research on employee performance in Uganda generally found that performance levels were below average. For instance, Kyobe and Munene (2014) reported that just 26% of employees in local government were assessed as highly performing, with the remaining employees being rated as average or low performers.

Kyobe and Munene (2014) further explained that, one of the main factors influencing employee performance was motivation. High employee motivation increases the likelihood of workers to do more, be more dedicated to their jobs, and come up with more creative solutions to problems.

Unlike Kyobe and Munene (2014), Kondowe, (2014) broadened the scope of factors which influence employee performance to include activities such as hiring, training, managing performance, rewarding employees, and conducting employee performance reviews. Employees can, for instance, gain insight into their goals, receive feedback on their development, and pinpoint areas for improvement with the aid of a successful employee performance appraisal. Also, giving employees the chance for training and development can increase their knowledge and abilities, which can result in better performance.

Consequently, it is crucial to look into how closely HRM practices relate with employee performance in order to solve the subpar performance levels of local government employees in Eastern-Uganda. Organizations can create strategies to improve their HRM practices and ultimately employee performance by identifying the HRM practices that are linked to improved performance.

In order to remedy on some of the bottlenecks affecting performance of employees in local governments in Eastern Uganda, the study was carried.

2. Literature Review

Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) was a distinctive approach to employment management which sought to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic development of a highly committed and capable workforce using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques (Storey, 2001). While Armstrong (2009) defines HRM as a strategic, coherent and comprehensive approach to the management and development of the organization's human resources in which every aspect of that process is wholly integrated within the overall management of the organization. HRM is a strategic approach to managing human resources that encompasses all managerial choices and activities that impact the relationship between the company and its employees, according to Beer et al. (1984). These definitions have encompassed the linking of various HRM practices with organizational goals.

Mahmood (2004) asserts that HRM practices are linked with the management of human resources, activities necessary for staffing the organization and sustaining high employee performance. Peterson and Tracey (1979) broadened Mahmood's (2004) definition to look at human resource management practices as the activities within a given firm that deal with the recruiting, selecting, appraising, rewarding training and development of employees including managers, compensation management, safety and health, industrial relations as well as negotiating with labour unions.

Huang (2000), asserts that HRM practices is one area that influences employees' intention to leave, levels of job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. This suggests that the goals of human resource management are to identify competent, adaptable, and dedicated individuals, manage and pay for their performance, and foster the development of critical competencies. While there is disagreement within the profession over the optimal techniques for human resource management, there is a general understanding that these practices can enhance employee performance (Storey, 2001). This can be achieved by giving workers more responsibility, developing positive attitudes and motivation, and enhancing their skills and abilities (Patterson et al., 1997).

According to Armstrong (2010), HRM refers to the procedures for managing human resources in a business, including hiring and firing employees, training staff members, managing performance and remuneration, and promoting employee input in decision-making. Foss and Lyngsie (2011) and Battaglio and Bogue (2016) provide the following justifications for implementing HRM practices: first, to assign responsibilities to workers and teams; second, to create and promote incentives for knowledge sharing, individual achievements, and benefit-sharing; third, as a channel for intra-organizational information sharing about practices like job rotation and knowledge sharing; fourth, to create opportunities for internal and external training for workers.

While several scholars identify several HRM Practices, this study Human Resource Management practices were conceptualized under the dimensions of Employee Rewards, Training and Development, as well as Employee Performance Appraisal. The three dimensions were selected because this research was interested in establishing their influence on employee performance in the selected Local Governments, in Eastern Uganda.

Employee Performance

Armstrong (2010) defined employee performance as the ability to perform effectively in an employee's job requirements. Performance however, could be described in various ways. It could be an act of accomplishing or executing a given task. It could also be described as the ability to combine skillfully the right behaviour towards the achievement of organizational goals and objectives (Olaniyan, 1999). Employee performance could be described as the duties performed by an employee at a particular period of time in achieving organizational goals (Obilade, 1999). It could also be described as the ability of an employee to combine relevant inputs for the enhancement of teaching and learning processes (Okeniyi, 1995).

Rose (2022) found that performance is a comprehensive and multipart observable fact. However, argued that employee performance is determined by the worker's level of participation in the day to day running of the organization. It is noted that employees behave differently in different situations.

Adair (2005) looks at performance as the ability of employees to meet organizational tasks, requirements and objectives through strategic investment into organizing, executing and accomplishing roles and duties in the minimum time possible. Employee performance is the action or behaviour and activities that are judged to be important for the accomplishment of organizational goals. This consequently implies that performance is multi-faceted. It can be measured in terms of output and outcome, profit, internal processes and procedures,

organizational structures, employee attitudes and organizational responsiveness to the environment among others.

Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance

The research conducted by Mira et al. (2019) showed the noteworthy and favorable impacts of human resource management (HRM) practices, particularly those related to social support, recruitment and selection, job analysis, worker empowerment, training and development, worker relations, and rewards, on employee performance. This result is consistent with the findings of Etaan and Jain (2019), who showed that HRM practices—specifically, performance appraisal, sourcing work for training and development, and reward management—had a favorable impact on worker performance.

Furthermore, Ngwenya and Aigbavboa (2017) demonstrated how particular HRM strategies enhanced workers' productivity and job execution in a building firm. They emphasized how well HRM procedures had improved productivity and work performance. Additionally, the survey discovered that contented workers performed their jobs better. Consequently, HRM procedures effectively and efficiently manage personnel to achieve the organization's key objectives (Zafar et al., 2018).

However, Al Damoe et al. (2017) showed that companies that use HRM techniques can achieve important HR outcomes in a study on Libyan businesses. The study by Lim and Ahmad (2021) demonstrated the important and advantageous effects of HRM practices on worker performance, particularly about work-life balance, training and development, and pay and benefits.

Similarly, Hee and Jing (2018) talked on how HRM practices—specifically, work-life policies, compensation and benefits, performance appraisal, and training and development—affect workers' productivity in Johor, Malaysian manufacturing enterprises. Employee performance was closely linked to training and development as well as performance reviews. The outcomes also showed that work-life rules, incentives, and pay are not reliable measures of employee performance.

Employee performance was found to be significantly correlated with HRM practices, according to Alsafadi and Altahtat (2021). According to Tabouli et al. (2016), HRM practices have a major impact on employees' job performance. The study then suggested putting into practice particular HRM procedures that the workers had pointed out to improve the calibre of their work performance.

Qureshi et al. (2006) note that HRM practices were positively correlated with employee performance. However, recruitment and selection and T&D affect employee performance more than the other practices. Likewise, Huselid, (1995) found, through observing HRM practices, that recruiting and selecting the right individuals increases employee performance, enhances organizational performance and contributes to decreasing employee turnover. Moreover, it has been specified that a good recruitment and selection programme provides a positive influence in increasing employee commitment, efficiency, work quality and performance (Patimah, 2015).

According to Tzafirir (2005), T&D is a crucial instrument for developing and advancing human capital. Employees feel obligated to the company because of the investment in T&D programs. Additionally, T&D is required for employees to carry out certain activities, particularly when those tasks call for specialized knowledge and skills. According to Qureshi et al. (2006), employee performance and T&D are significantly positively correlated.

Luo et al. (2021) investigated the relationship among training, supervisory mentoring, job satisfaction, and task performance, with the consideration of interpersonal helping's moderating role. The results show that training and supervisory mentoring have significant effects on job satisfaction and task performance; job satisfaction has a positive effect on task performance and along with supervisory mentoring, interpersonal helping has a moderating effect on task performance.

As stated by Melian and Bulchand (2017) in the investigation of the relationship among front office employees' performance, information technologies (IT), service encounters, and critical incidents, IT takes part heavily in the task performance of front office workers, who rely on IT to get their job done. On the other hand, in service encounters, the value of human presence is still high, and in most critical incidents IT do not participate. Sendawula et al. (2018) in the investigation of training and employee engagement on employee performance using evidence from Uganda's health sector considered the relationship between training, employee engagement, and employee performance.

In the Sultanate of Oman, Moideenkutty et al. (2011) investigated the connection between highly involved HRM practices and organizational performance. 87 firms from the publicly listed (SAOG) and closely owned (SAOC) sectors of the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) made up the study's target group. The results demonstrated a substantial and favourable relationship between high-engagement HRM practices and organizational success.

Atteya (2012) analyzed the effects of HRM practices on employee performance. The results showed a strong positive relationship between HRM practices and work performance, as well as the mediating effects of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, desire to leave, unfavourable word of mouth, and organizational citizenship behavior.

The association between SHRM practices and organizational performance was examined by Loo & Beh (2013). The intended audience was non-executives, executives, managers, and upper management from seven Klang Valley-based insurance industry headquarters in Malaysia. The best indicators of firm performance, according to the findings, were career planning, internal communication, performance reviews, and SHRM alignment throughout the company.

The effects of organizational culture, knowledge management, organizational innovation, and human resource management techniques on organizational performance were investigated by Al-bahussin & El-Garaihy (2013). 203 human resource directors from significant enterprises in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia made up the research population. The findings indicated that organizational culture, knowledge management, and organizational innovation are significantly influenced by human resource management. Conversely, research indicates that effective human resource management techniques have a favourable effect on organizational performance.

The study of Kamran, *et al* (2008) inquired on the correlation between human resource management practices and employee commitment in the Banking Sector in Pakistan. Furthermore, the study addressed the employee's attitude and sensitivity towards different HR practices i.e., selection, training, job definition, career planning, and employee participation. Human resource practices help promote and improve the commitment of employees. For this matter, more than 18 private sector banks are studied. The findings reveal that human resource management practices are not only the important determinant of the employee commitment but can also play important role to improve the performance of employee. This study had some constructs under my study like training and employee commitment notwithstanding their relevance, however, the study areas were in the private sector thus necessitating further studies in the public sector.

Sohrab and Shahzad (2011) on the study HRM and employee performance: A case of university teachers of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in Pakistan. The study investigated the impact of three HR practices on the perceived performance of university teachers in AJK. The result of the study showed that the compensation practices in relation to the employees' performance are significantly positively correlated whereas the performance evaluation and promotion practices have an insignificant relationship with the performance of university teachers in AJK Pakistan. Results were discussed in the context of AJK universities. This study is similar to the current study however, the geographical scope of the study was in Pakistan and specifically looked at University teachers, which creates a knowledge gap regarding how HRM practices influence employees' performance in LGs in Uganda in particular. Therefore, this study delved into the Ugandan situation and surveyed the case of LGs employees in Eastern Uganda.

Organizations that need to thrive, especially in a highly competitive business climate, must make sure that the public and private sectors create the right conditions for higher work performance. These conditions should meet employee expectations, boost job satisfaction, and ultimately improve workforce performance. This is according to Akinyele (2010).

3. Methodology

Study Approach and Design

The study was largely dominated by a quantitative research approach. Descriptive, survey, correlational and cross-sectional designs were adopted by this study. The descriptive design focuses on characterizing the traits of particular groups, estimating the frequencies or proportions of participants in a given population, examining the correlations between variables, or formulating specific predictions.

The study also used a cross-section of respondents; this involved the use of a self-administered questionnaire to selected Local Government employees. The cross-sectional survey was the most appropriate because it allowed the collection of all the data required on given variables at a given point in time (Amin, 2005a). This ensured that all the data required was collected within a short period of time, despite the relatively large sample of respondents.

Study Population and Sample Size

A total population of 1273 Civil Servants (CAOs, HRMs, personnel officers and Heads of Departments among others) in the five local governments in Eastern Uganda were considered. The sample size determination in this study was based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table. A sample of 336 was arrived at finally.

Data Collection Methods

Self-administered questionnaires (SAQ) were frequently used in this study to collect primary data. A questionnaire is a carefully designed instrument consisting of a set of items to which respondents are expected to react usually in writing, used for gathering information about variables of interest in an investigation (Amin, 2005). Questionnaires were preferred basically because: the study was concerned mainly with employees' opinions that could not be directly observed; The sample size (336) used in the study was quite large and given the time constraint, it was the most ideal tool for data collection within the shortest time possible; Besides, the target population for this study was largely literate and were unlikely to experience difficulties responding to questionnaire items.

Data Analysis

SPSS (statistical package for social scientists) was used. Quantitative data was analysed using Frequencies and Percentages, means and standard deviations, correlation and regression analysis were used to establish the effect of human resource management practices on Employee Performance in selected Local Governments, in Eastern Uganda.

4. Results

In this study, the researcher investigated the impact of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on employee performance in selected local governments in eastern Uganda. They employed regression analysis to explore the relationship between HRM practices and performance. Before regression, they assessed correlation using Pearson's coefficient. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2 containing information about correlation coefficients, regression coefficients, and statistical significance of the studied relationship.

Table 1: Pearson Linear Coefficient Correlation for Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance

Correlations			
		Human Resource Management Practices	Employee Performance
Human Resource Management Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.501**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

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

Source: Primary Data (2023)

As per the results in Table 1, The study conducted in selected local governments in Eastern Uganda revealed a positive and significant association between human resource management practices and employee performance ($r = .501$, $Sig. = .000$). These findings imply that improving human resource management practices will improve performance of employees in selected local governments in eastern Uganda and vice versa. This suggests that enhancing human resource management practices can lead to improved employee performance in the region. After confirming the positive relationship between human resource management practices and employees' performance in selected local governments in eastern Uganda, the study conducted a regression analysis and the findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis for Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.498 ^a	.421	.419	.41860

a. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Management Practices

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.603	1	7.603	42.775	.000 ^b
	Residual	11.448	78	.175		
	Total	20.822	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Management Practices						

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.620	.358		2.056	.044
	Livelihood Support	.651	.112	.613	6.441	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

Source: Primary Data (2023)

In the regression Table 2 above, R-squared (R^2) represents the proportion of variance in employee performance that can be explained by the independent variable (human resource management practices). An R^2 value of 0.421 indicates that approximately 42.1% of the variability in employee performance can be attributed to variations in human resource management practices. In other words, these practices account for a significant portion of the differences in performance among employees in selected local governments in eastern Uganda.

Under ANOVA, Significance (Sig.) further assesses whether the relationship between human resource management practices and employee performance is statistically significant. A significance level of 0.000 (which is less than the conventional threshold of 0.05) suggests that the association is highly significant. Therefore, we can confidently conclude that there is a meaningful relationship between Human Resource Management Practices and Employee Performance in selected local governments in eastern Uganda. The F-statistic assesses the overall significance of the regression model. In this case, an F-value of 42.775 indicates that the model as a whole is statistically significant. It implies that the combination of independent variables (including human resource practices) significantly affects employee performance.

Under coefficients, the Beta coefficients represent the strength and direction of the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable (employee performance). A Beta value of 0.613 indicates a positive association. Specifically, for every one-unit increase in human resource management practices, employee performance is expected to increase by approximately 0.613 units (while controlling for other factors).

Results from this study agree with some previous studies conducted on the same subject; for example, a study titled "Employees Involvement as Agent of Change Management and Performance of Local Governments in Eastern Uganda: An Empirical Study" investigated the correlation between employee involvement and the performance of local governments in Eastern Uganda. Notably, it revealed a strong positive association between employees' active participation and overall performance. The study recommended leveraging employees as change agents to enhance organizational effectiveness (Okello & Wabwire, 2018).

In another relevant study, "Human Resource Practices and Performance Management of Small-scale Enterprises in Uganda", although focused on small-scale enterprises, sheds light on HRM practices. It examines how these practices influence performance management. Specifically, you might explore its insights related to employee resourcing and performance improvement strategies (Nambalirwa & Ntayi, 2017).

Additionally, "Training, employee engagement, and employee performance: Evidence from..."⁴, although not Uganda-specific, delves into the relationship between training initiatives, employee engagement, and overall performance. The study found positive associations between training opportunities, employee engagement levels, and subsequent performance outcomes (Sendawula et al., 2018).

In summary, the results suggest that effective human resource management practices positively impact employee performance in selected local governments in Eastern Uganda. Improving these practices may lead to better performance outcomes for employees.

5. Recommendations

In line with this study's findings, the research recommends as follows:-

Invest in Human Resource Practices: Given the positive association between human resource management practices and employee performance, local governments in Eastern Uganda should prioritize investing in effective HR practices. This includes recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and employee development.

Training and Development Programs: Implement training programs to enhance employees' skills, knowledge, and competencies. Regular workshops, seminars, and skill-building sessions can contribute to improved performance.

Performance Appraisal Systems: Establish robust performance appraisal systems that provide constructive feedback to employees. Regular evaluations can help identify areas for improvement and recognize high-performing individuals.

Employee Motivation and Engagement: Foster a positive work environment by recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance. Motivated and engaged employees are more likely to excel.

Leadership Development: Invest in leadership development programs for managers and supervisors. Effective leadership positively influences employee performance.

Communication Channels: Ensure clear communication channels within the organization. Employees should understand their roles, responsibilities, and organizational goals.

Work-Life Balance: Promote work-life balance to prevent burnout and enhance overall well-being. Satisfied employees are more likely to perform better.

Remember that these recommendations should be tailored to the specific context of each local government district. Regular monitoring and evaluation will help assess the impact of these interventions.

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