

HPWP (High Performance Work Practices) and Its Role on Promoting the Employee Performance in the Nigerian Hotel Industry

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The current study discusses the significance of High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) and analyses its relevance to employee engagement and performance in Nigeria. Hotel employees with different background are interviewed and their views thematically analysed. Findings show that when employees feel more engaged with their jobs, they are more likely to support HPWPs, recognizing its importance and demonstrating creative performance. The relationship between HPWPs and performance outcomes is strengthened by managerial trust in employees' capability and appreciation for work done. Research findings offer unique understanding of HPWPs and clarify its application efficiency in the hospitality industry. Implications are discussed.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Engagement, Hotel Industry, HPWP, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Employee Engagement (EE) and performance has been seen to be one critical human resource construct and an indispensable part of every organisation that has become a more strategic approach to achieving competitive advantage, ensuring efficiency of work and driving a sustainable organisational performance (Schaufeli, 2012). Despite the growing interest on engagement, research has shown that the world of employment is experiencing a radical change and employees are becoming less motivated to work (Chattered Institute of Personnel Development [CIPD], 2016). Researchers have identified a worrying drop in job satisfaction (well-being of employees) and a significant increase in the number of employees looking for new jobs especially in the service industry in Nigerian, across the United Kingdom and the United State of America (Akinwade, 2011; CIPD, 2016; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2015). With the need to engage employees, organisations constantly look for ways to engage and further advance employee performance. For instance, one common strategy has been to understand employee behaviour, and identify diverse possibilities of engaging employees in their jobs (Robertson & Marwick, 2009). In addition, another strategy has involved the strategic management of human resource within an organisation (Mittal, 2012). However, in other to manage human resources, research over the past two decades suggested that there may be Human Resource (HR) practices, which will improve employee well-being and lead to increased performance. These practices were referred to by Arthur, (1994) and Huselid, (1995) as High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs).

Although there is growing evidence that High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) leads to high performance, there have been various sample characteristics, methods, several models, different research designs, practice examined, and organisational performance measures used that have led extant literature to vary dramatically (Zhang & Morris, 2014). More so, the underlying mechanism through which HPWPs are linked to employee outcomes is still sporadic, as research has shown that there is no consensus relating to the mechanism underlying the relationship between HPWPs and performance outcomes, in spite of its robust theoretical and empirical presence (Do 2016; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Pereira & Gomes, 2012). Do (2016, p. 14) identifying a number of issues pertaining to HPWPs, pointed out a few which includes; ‘lack of conceptual lens (Michaelis, Wagner & Schweizer, 2014); inconsistent dimensions of HPWPs (Shih, Chiang, & Hsu, 2013); a single source of data (Shih et al., 2013); lopsided HPWPs research between Western and non-Western contexts and some sub-dimensions of HPWPs that are more critical than others (Selden, Schimmoeller, & Thompson, 2013).’ This suggests the need to understand the relationship between HPWPs and performance outcomes from a qualitative perspective (Aryee, *et al.*, 2012; Christian *et al.*, 2011; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016; Kehoe & Wright’s, 2013; Schaufeli, 2012 and Zhong *et al.*, 2016). One striking similarity across majority of the literature on HPWPs-performance relationship is the adoption a quantitative method of analysis, which may have created room for ambiguity for example Stephen, Daniels and Ogbonnaya (2018); Karatepe and Vatankhah, (2015) Mahmood *et al.* (2019). This ambiguity advocates for more qualitative research to gain in-depth understanding on the opinions and perception of employees and managers on the relationship between HPWPs and performance. For this reason, this research adopting a qualitative approach aims to understand how important HPWPs are to performance from the perspective of employee engagement.

With the recent economic uncertainty in the Nigerian economy due to the high dependence on oil, the hospitality sector has become a niche area to study as it contributes immensely to the country’s economy (Worldwide Hospitality and Terrorism Themes (WHATT), 2016). According to the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS] (2015), the Nigerian tourism sector directly contributed N1.56 billion to the national economy. Undoubtedly, the growth of the hospitality industry in Nigeria would have been faster and the quality of services better if the industry had access to a larger pool of motivated and engaged employees (Ibid, 2016). Additionally, Adedipe and Adeleke’s study in 2016 reported poor levels of employee engagement, which influenced their capability to perform well within the Nigerian hotel industry. In their study, they reported two major findings; the lack of appreciation of employees in spite of the labour intensity of the job and apathy relating to the need for consistent investment in human resource development. They believe the sustainability of the hotel investment in Nigeria relies heavily on management committing to the development of its employees. This, approach should be embraced in the organisation’s corporate strategy (Ibid, 2016).

The study addresses this gap by exploring employees and Human Resource (HR) managers perception of the importance of High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) to employee creative performance; The study further investigates how employee engagement improves the relationship between HPWPs and employee creative performance and finally evaluates the existing HPWPs in Nigerian hotels making suggestions for improvement. Based on the precepts of social exchange theory (SET) and the motivational process of the AMO framework, the presence of HPWPs engages employees and motivates employees to display quality performance (Karatepe, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

High Performance Work Practice

Over the past 10 to 15 years the notion or concept of ‘high-performance work systems’ (HPWSs) has generated a lot of interest amongst scholars and influential public reports etc., (Boxall & Macky, 2009). While interest in HPWPs is a gaining traction, it lacks an agreed upon definition and conceptualisation. However, for the purpose of this study, HPWP’s has been conceptualised using the AMO model developed by Appelbaum *et al.* (2000) and defined the concept as a combination of distinct but

interconnected Human Resource management practices, designed to structure the HRM system, enhance employee performance by stimulating creativity and firm performance ((Applebaum, 2000; Hefferman & Dundon 2016; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007). A study by Tomazevic, Seljak, and Aristovnik (2015) that gave credence to Arthur and Huselids claims, demonstrated that HPWPs which when applied to the HR practice could facilitate employee well-being, keep employees engaged, create competitive advantage and lead to higher organisational performance. However, what HPWPs appear to share in common is that they are positively framed and seek to benefit both employees and organisations (Saridakis, Yanqing & Cooper, 2017).

However, in order to analyse the objective of this study, and in accordance with Do, (2016), the researcher have included in this study three categories of practices that have been accepted in the literature as belonging to the construct HPWP: Cross departmental training, Internal mobility and empowerment.

Cross Departmental Training

In Yen *et al.* (2016) study, they observed that cross-departmental training leads to career development and enable employees establish goals. The implication is that cross-trained employees expand their exposure to task, and enhance their ability to perform better. More so, Obeidat *et al.* (2016) noted that cross training facilitates the transference of skills and ability. More importantly, in the hospitality industry, cross-departmental training is not only a good practice but necessary with today's economic challenges and competitive work environment.

Internal Mobility

According to Sun *et al.* (2007), internal mobility involves 'promotion from within' 'broad career paths', where employees have the opportunity to move across departments horizontally or vertically. In view of this, Sun *et al.* (2007) argued that such HPWPs signal an organisation's intention to establish a long-term exchange relationship with its employees. According to these scholars satisfying employees goals influences the perception of a work environment that is supportive and facilitates engagement.

Empowerment

As another vital indicator of HPWPs, empowerment refers to "the freedom, opportunity and ability to make decisions and commitments" (Forrester, 2000, p. 67). Guchait *et al.* (2012) opined that empowerment enables employees' make creative judgment, fulfil their duties, provide quick and fair responses to customers' request. However, in view of the abovementioned practice, Karatepe, (2013) indicated that there is a relationship between training and empowerment. He suggests that making use of these practices coherently will generate the required outcome any organisation desires (Karatepe, 2013).

Since these landmark publications, several authors believe HPWPs is an organisational strategy adopted to manage human resources and improve employee performance (Mittal, 2012). Despite the growing evidence that High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) leads to high employee performance, there has been various various sample characteristics, methods, several models, different research designs, practice examined, and organisational performance measures used that have led extant literature to vary dramatically when understanding the relationship between HPWPs and employee performance (Zhang & Morris, 2014). More so, the underlying mechanism through which HPWPs are linked to employee outcomes is still sporadic, as research has shown that there is no consensus relating to the mechanism underlying the relationship between HPWPs and performance outcomes, in spite of its robust theoretical and empirical presence (Do 2016; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Pereira & Gomes, 2012). As a result of this, there is now a major body of academic work on HPWPs, traversing the field of strategic HRM aiming to impact knowledge on the debate surrounding the relationship.

HPWPs – Performance Relationship

Boxall and Macky, (2009) amidst many other researchers provided a strong rationale supporting the value of HPWPs to performance. To them, the notion of a high-performance work system (HPWS) or

HPWPs constitutes a claim that there is a system of work practices within organisations that leads to superior performance. In their study, they examine the underpinning processes experienced by employees when management seeks to pursue HPWPs and charting their links to employee and organisational performance outcomes. In addition, the work of Boxall and Macky (2009) provide a strong justification when exploring the concept of a high-performance work systems. They believe the term is ‘ethnocentric’ because certain practices defined as a high-performance work practice (HPWP) in a North American context may be institutionally impossible in other national contexts. This idea according to Karatepe and Olugbade, (2016); Babakus *et al.* (2008) suggested the need for further research in countries like Nigeria in order to both identify the factors that are likely to represent HPWPs and their outcomes. By analysing these HPWPs necessary for improving performance in the service sector in Nigeria, the researcher may provide insight into the process that motivates employees to perform better in their jobs.

Given the current economic and social problems such as political instability, corruption, high unemployment rate and gender inequality faced by Nigeria, it is important to focus on other alternative industries such as hospitality industry to generate effective drivers of economic growth (CNN, 2016; Okpara & Wynn, 2008). This necessitates the need to develop employees within the hospitality industry. To address such concerns listed above, the study therefore advances the theoretical logic by extending Social exchange theory and AMO framework as tools to explain the relationship between HPWPs, employee engagement and performance. Taken together, this study continues to advance this stream of research by examining employee engagement and extended theories, with its focus on qualitative data to gain insights into the importance of HPWPs on performance via semi structured interview of frontline employees and manager in Nigerian hotels.

As a result of the ambiguity around the mechanism linking HPWPs to performance, several scholars have proposed several concepts which vary dramatically. One example is the work of Gong *et al.* (2013) who analysed the relationship of core knowledge creativity and its impact on performance. They show that, although creativity does not necessarily enhance performance, it is not a means to an end. In simple terms it is a means to achieve superior performance. To them in other to achieve this organisation need to find an equilibrium between creation and implementation of ideas. Researchers have suggested that when little or no attention is paid to employee creativity, the level of performance may be affected (Gong *et al.*, 2013). This has necessitated the examination of employee creative performance as a need for workers in jobs with minimal requirement for creativity, as this may lead to acceptance of HPWPs and organisational performance.

The constant focus on human resources indicates the importance of managing human resources to maximize and enhance organisational performance thereby creating value (Combs *et al.*, 2006). Having identified the recent adoption of HPWPs by organisations as the strategy to manage human resources and further justify the need for an engaged environment where employee’s performance can be improved, it becomes important to critically analyse the relationship between engagement and HPWPs (Mittal, 2012). In order to gain a better understanding of how Human Resources (HR) Practices (HPWPs) can create an environment where employees are engaged leading to increased performance, the next paragraph will provide a recap on HPWPs and discuss the literature surrounding its relationship with employee engagement.

HPWPs and Employee Engagement

A great deal of work has been published by authors, academics, consultants and practitioners on what drives engagement (Macleod and Clarke, 2009). For example, Tamkin, (2004, p.6) believed that “High involvement practices/High Performance Work Practices aim to create opportunities for engagement (for example semi-autonomous teams, problem-solving, teams, continuous-improvement teams, responsibility for own work quality, job rotation within and/or between teams, team briefings, staff suggestion schemes, attitude surveys).” Further research Tamkin made also identified presents HPWPs as a strong and persuasive case that creates room for employee engagement. She believed “that the critical value of the research in high performance work practices (HPWPs) is in highlighting the importance of considering investment in the workforce in the context of the broader company structure, practices and company

strategy.” Accordingly, it is likely that practices act to improve skills and increase motivation within the context of a philosophy of work that emphasises employee engagement and promotes work systems, allowing involvement and the freedom to make decisions. Under such conditions people can make a decisive difference to organisational performance.” (Tamkin, 2004, p.12). Some theories have also provided justification for the relationship between HPWPs and engagement. One is the social exchange theory discussed by Takeuchi *et al.* (2007) which suggests that employees are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organisation, when they perceive that their organisation is providing a system of interconnected and well-designed management practices, such as; HPWPs.

The HPWPs perspective as earlier discussed emphasizes the importance of having a mutually reinforced HR practices, an idea that can consistently be maximized when integrated and bundled, this in turn forms a coherent system (Macky & Boxall, 2007). This simply means that HPWPs applied coherently gives latitude to employee to act efficiently and make decisions (Macky & Boxall, 2007). Furthermore, the AMO theory have categorized HPWPs into ability, opportunity and motivation-enhancing high-performance work systems (Appelbaum *et al.* 2000; Huselid, 1995; Jiang *et al.*, 2012). This categorization is grounded in the view that people perform well when they are able and have the personal motivation to do so (Huselid, 1995; Jiang *et al.*, 2012). This indicates that, most HR practices coherently lead to skill enhancing (Obeidat *et al.*, 2016). The effect of accumulating several HR practices that affects the same work characteristic may enhance employee performance which in turn exert greater positive influence on organisational performance (Huselid, 1995; Jiang *et al.*, 2012). For example, it is proposed that the systematic combination of staffing (recruitment, selection and training practices) will lead to the desired organisational performance, by attracting and selecting highly qualified applicants, who will undergo training then they will have the necessary skills to take on task and ensure a high level of performance (Jiang *et al.*, 2012). This implies that, neither staffing nor training functions better alone, jointly, they can enhance the employee workforce (Obeidat *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, scholars have increasingly and convincingly shown that HR practices or HPWPs leads to various outcomes, such as KSA, satisfaction and affective commitment (He *et al.*, 2017). However, in the search for the underlying mechanisms linking HPWPs or HR practices to individual or organizational performance, which some authors refer to as the ‘black box’ (an unresolved issue in HRM), researchers and practitioners have begun to consider the role of engagement in shaping the understanding of the HR practice – performance relationship (Barrick *et al.*, 2015; CIPD, 2016).

HPWPs, Employee Engagement and Employee Creative Performance

Over the past decade social exchange theory developed by (Blau, 1964) has been widely used by Human resource management scholars to explain the relationship between HPWPs and employee outcomes (Jiang *et al.*, 2012). Following the ‘normative rule of reciprocity’ the theory suggests that employees are motivated to display/develop positive attitude and behaviours towards work when they perceive employers value their contribution (Alfes *et al.*, 2013). Some employees expect a “give and take” practice to assure them that their contributions are valued. Accordingly, Fletcher (2015) argued that employees have been seen to continually participate in a ‘give and take’ relationship with their employer, whereby one party gives a socio-emotional resource that is desired by the other in exchange for what the other party desires. This exchange relationship is being upheld/maintained by the principle of mutual reciprocity, that is “whatever you do to someone expect the same in return”. Therefore, these employees feel obligated to ‘repay’ the organisation by engaging themselves in their respective roles and as such begin to display creativity and service-oriented organisational citizenship behaviour (Saks, 2006). Given that employees perform roles based on their job description, Pratt and Ashforth, (2003) opine that employee engagement will consist of two distinct but related concepts; the job engagement as well as the organisational engagement. For them, job engagement refers to the extent to which an employee is cognitively present in their job role, where such an employee begins to display enthusiasm and perform jobs with so much energy (Fletcher, 2015; Saks, 2006). This realisation influences engagement which subsequently will lead to creativity and organisational performance.

Employee Creative Performance

In today's competitive service market where there are continuous evolving demands of discerning customers, delivery of service quality and service recovery as well as retention of loyal customers are keys to success and survival (Karatepe & Vantankhah, 2014). Fu, (2015) also noted that employees play a critical role in ensuring they retain customers. Such employees are expected to make constructive suggestions for service improvements and offer creative solutions to customers in need. With this in mind, it appears that creativity has become a requirement for service jobs. Creativity refers to the amount of new ideas generated and novel behaviour displayed by employees in carrying out job-related tasks (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004).

In recent research in work psychology, one of the most important developments has been to demonstrate that work is not stable from one task to the next, from one day to the next, from one client to the next, which suggest the need for creativity (Bakker & Daniels, 2013). Due to this realization, expecting employees to display a positive performance outcome requires a work environment where there is high performance work practices (HPWPs) (Karatepe & Vantankhah, 2014). The existence of HPWPs in an organization leads to feelings of engagement, which will in turn result in behavioural responses such as employee creativity (Ibid, 2014). Consequently, for creative performance to occur within a firm, HPWPs must impact employees' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness by facilitating a collective HR practice, this thereby facilitates an environment. Once these employee needs are fulfilled, motivation sparks up leading to creative initiatives. As such, this research starts form the most immediate outcome of HPWPs rather than examining the direct effect on performance. Rooted in the Social Exchange theory. we therefore explore the intermediate relationships between HPWPs and creative performance through employee engagement.

This study therefore contributes to existing knowledge by addressing the issues around creative performance in the service industry. One of which is the lacks empirical attention within the service industry (Hom *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the researcher will aim to expand and integrate the SHRM and creativity literatures. As one example of SHRM, we specifically focus on high performance work practice (HPWP), which focuses on interrelated "system of human resource management practices (such as empowerment, internal mobility and cross departmental training) that signal commitment to the employees" (Xiao & Tsui, 2007, p.2).

METHOD AND SAMPLE

Case Study of Hotels

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the ethical review board of (information withheld for anonymity). Accordingly, participants consent was formally obtained. The current study adopting a qualitative stance through semi structured interviews, employed data from three hotels in Nigeria, which allowed the researcher to investigate and understand how important HPWPs is to performance outcomes. Data were obtained from frontline employees and HR managers within hotels (e.g., front desk, kitchen staff, porters) across Nigeria, which is one of the most known touristic destinations in Africa and has raised speculations around the expected economic growth by about 2.5% in 2019, based on the accelerated investment and refocus on other sectors of the economy (e.g. agriculture, service) (World Bank, 2017).

While considering the selection of the organisations was based on quality outcome and exploring the role of HPWPs as a factor in those outcomes, this research rationale for frontline employee's stems from the daily and frequent interaction with customers (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). Similarly, the choice of collecting data from HR managers hinges on the fact that they play an important role and are at the centre of implementation of these HPWPs.

With the use of semi-structured interviews, information obtained from thirty-four (34) participants from three Nigerian hotels at the time of this study showed that each hotel falls in the category of (international, national, four and five-star) located across the three economic and political hubs of Nigeria. All the participants had one form of formal education or the other having qualifications that

range from Senior Secondary School Certificate to Master's degree certificates. Working experience shows a record of 0.1 to 10 years in the hospitality industry. Following (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012), remedies, the information page contained information such as "Any sort of information collected during our research will be kept in confidential" and "Participation is voluntary but encouraged". In addition, each employee or HR manager, was assured of anonymity. The abovementioned practices are in accordance with the works of Bouzari and Karatepe (2018).

RESULTS

The following are results of interviews in the company selected. Data obtained was further analysed thematically and themes were developed during the study. It is important to note that HPWPs in hospitality businesses have only started gaining traction in the world of SHRM and have left room for more robust insight (Gursoy, 2018).

Overall, the results of this analysis revealed a positive perception and understanding employees and HR managers have towards the utilisation of HPWPs and its influence on performance. Following this, employees and HR managers highlighted the importance of an engaged environment facilitating the need for enthusiasm and motivation to work. Consequently, employees and HR managers show the importance of the two salient concepts, "trust in employee's capability" and "appreciation of employee's effort", to which they strongly believe will impact the performance of their organisations.

Accordingly, employees believe that in order for creative performance to occur in organisations, employers should invest optimally in employees ensuring they possess the right skillset, knowledge (ability), motivation and opportunity needed for high performing and creative performance. In view of this, organisations must design, strategize and implement certain HR practices that advance the ability (skills, knowledge of employees), encourage their willingness to exert effort and opportunities to express their talents in work tasks (Boxall, 2012). Similarly, HR managers should give their employees the opportunity and support that can motivate them to work more creatively.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

Construct	Interview Excerpts
Employees and manager's perception of the potential influence of High-Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) on employee creative performance	<i>If I am happy..... I will think of what I can do to contribute, but if I am not happy, I would not share knowledge. For me I don't think I will contribute at all as I do not think I am well valued. Creativity has to do with my own personal effort... I believe if you introduce career advancement and progression properly, be rest assured I will feel very happy and valued... Trust me I will put in a lot of effort in this work. (Respondent 1 (c), Hotel 3).</i>
Employee engagement as a mechanism that improves the relationship between HPWPs and employee creative performance.	<i>Engagement focuses on the ability to properly manage employees. In fact, making sure that these employees don't experience belated pay is very essential for their engagement (Respondent 1 (f), Hotel 3).</i>
Opportunity and constraints (if any) of implementing HPWPs in Nigerian hotels.	<i>Trainings to develop abilities of staff were introduced like: communication skills, accommodation skills, technical skills such as tiling, electrification, plumbing, catering.... A monthly package of N10, 000 (about £20) given to the most outstanding employee, continuous free feeding of staff and words of encouragement from managers /supervisors are some of the motivational strategies adopted. In addition, I create staff interaction with prominent men and women in the society. Finally, I invite members from the ownership of the hotel by the State government to speak to our employees and sponsor part time studies for the higher institutions of learning. These are opportunities other hotels don't have... to be brutally honest this works on some employees but not all (Respondent 3 (d); Respondent 1 (e))</i>

More so, in determining the opportunity and constraints (if any) of implementing HPWPs in Nigerian hotels, employees believe Management should invest resources such as pay, trainings etc., trust and appreciate the effort put into performing a task. Table 1 highlights certain key factors and constructs that support the respondents understanding of the importance of HPWPs to performance.

DISCUSSION

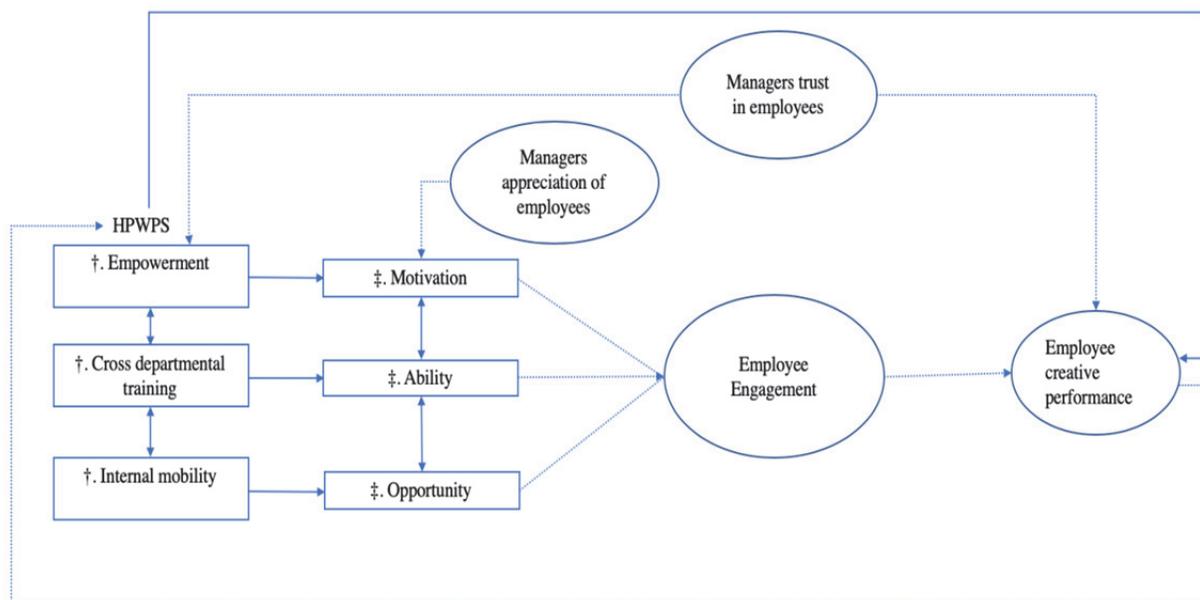
Past research has explored similar variables and modelled their dynamics to explain performance outcomes and related behavioural and attitudinal outcomes (Do 2016; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015). However, this study examined employees and manager's perception of the potential influence of High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) on employee creative performance and investigated how employee engagement may strengthen the relationship between HPWPs and employee creativity in Nigerian hotels.

With regard to the first three objectives, the interview results revealed the importance HPWPs has on employee performance outcome when properly implemented. With this in mind, organisations must design and implement HPWPs that advance the skills, and knowledge of employees, and encourage their willingness to exert effort and opportunities to express their talents in work tasks (Boxall, 2012). In turn, the role of employee engagement was understood as very important to the performance of employees, as the general perception across all respondents indicates that the effectiveness and efficiency of creating an employee engagement environment is influenced by creative activities which has its precursor from the HPWPs.

Interestingly, trust in employee’s ability to perform work and employers appreciating the work of the employees as seen from the interviews enables employees work in a supportive organisational environment that can motivate them to work more creatively and stimulate their potential for creative performance. Taken together, by investing in employees, the benefits will amount from their returned contribution, thereby leading to organisational performance as a whole. This line of reasoning is in line with Bae and Lawler (2000) finding, that organisations that value the management of human resources not only gain competitive advantage but create an engaged environment that positively influences performance. However, from a practical viewpoint, the results highlight HPWPs as HR strategies critical in today’s uncertain market environment.

Accordingly, by extending the theoretical lens, measuring new mechanism (employee engagement) and adopting a different methodology to better understand the relationship between HPWPs and Performance outcomes like many other scholars such as: (Stephen, Daniels & Ogonnaya 2018; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015 Mahmood, *et al.*, 2019), the current study uses a qualitative method approach to refine the relevant theoretical lens and develops a new model to that defines and provides an in-depth understanding of the relationship and importance of HPWPs to performance.

**FIGURE 1
RESEARCH FINDINGS FRAMEWORK**



Note: ‡. AMO Model (Applebaum et al., 2000);

†. HPWP-related studies;

- Proposed by previous studies of HPWP
- Proposed by the existing research findings;
- Concept in Oval shape was proposed by the research findings;
- Concept in Square shape was proposed by previous HPWP studies

Drawing on the social exchange theory, Figure 1 elucidates the view that implementing HPWPs appropriately within the hotels in Nigeria creates an engaged environment where employees feel appreciated and trusted to carry out their responsibilities thereby facilitating an improved employee performance: employee creative performance. In simple terms, high performance work practices (HPWPs) increase organisational effectiveness by creating conditions where employees become highly involved in the organization and work hard to accomplish its goals.

CONCLUSION

Recent years have witnessed considerable debate on the topic of HPWPs and its impact on employee engagement and performance. The evidence that supports the relationship between HPWPs and performance has been overwhelming, whereas only a small number have investigated the relationship from a qualitative stand point (see exception in: Do, 2016). Surprisingly, while using a qualitative approach, much research on HRM-performance relationship still uses words like ‘affect, impact or mediate’ to describe its findings; in essence, such description style suggests causality and thus research outcomes should be interpreted with caution (Guest *et al.*, 2003). Moreover, given a limited number of existing qualitative studies examining the relationship between HPWPs, employee engagement and performance outcomes, future research is encouraged to further develop the model within other fields in Nigeria.

Using thematic analysis, the existent research findings have provided in-depth understanding on the importance of HPWPs to creative performance, and more importantly introduced the role of employee engagement in the understanding of the relationship. This study can enhance performance of employees within the hotel industry in Nigeria, by creating an engaged environment where certain HPWPs such as internal mobility, empowerment and cross departmental training exist. In order to achieve this, management should utilize HPWPs that could increase employee perception of a supportive engaged environment, appreciation of employees and trust between management and employees. With such a climate that encourages employees to participate, gives them the opportunity to perform and equips them with skills that improve knowledge and facilitate autonomous decision making, employees are more likely to increase their creative performance and service oriented organisational citizenship behaviour. It goes on to suggest the need for trust and appreciation will provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between HPWPs, performance and employee engagement.

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