




Investigating the impact of human resource management practices on employee engagement, and the moderating role of strategy implementation in Egypt

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Dates:

Received: 08 June 2020

Accepted: 09 Mar. 2021

Published: 13 May 2021

How to cite this article:

Saad, M.M., Gaber, H.R., & Labib, A.A. (2021). Investigating the impact of human resource management practices on employee engagement, and the moderating role of strategy implementation in Egypt. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/ SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 19(0), a1412. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1412>

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Orientation: The concept of employee engagement has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners due to its importance in enhancing the performance and profitability of organisations.

Research Purpose: This article examines the impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on employee engagement in the Egyptian context. The purpose of this article was to develop an in-depth understanding of the concepts of HRM practices and their impact on employee engagement, and the moderating role of strategy implementation.

Motivation for the study: Given the scarcity of research that examines the impact of HRM practices on employee engagement especially in the banking sector, this article examines how different HRM practices can influence the level of employee engagement.

Research approach/design and method: For the purpose of answering the research questions and testing the proposed hypotheses, a quantitative research approach was adopted by distributing a questionnaire to 228 employees from the banking sector in Egypt.

Main findings: The findings indicated that HRM practices had a positive significant impact on employee engagement. In particular, these practices included selection and hiring, job design as well as reward and payment systems. However, the findings showed that the strategic implementation does not moderate the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.

Practical/managerial implications: This article provides some guidelines for organisations to follow to fully utilise the power of employee engagement by applying effective HRM practices.

Contribution/value-add: The contribution of this study is that it is one of the few studies that have so far investigated this relationship in the Egyptian environment.

Keywords: human resource management practices; HRM practices; employee engagement; Egyptian context; developing countries.

Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, many organisations are looking for new ways to enhance the productivity and performance of their human resources (Przytuła, Strzelec, & Krysińska-Kościańska, 2020).

Attracting, maintaining and developing an effective workforce is becoming one of the key challenges that these organisations are facing (Diaz-Carrion, López-Fernández, & Romero-Fernandez, 2021). In particular, after the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, many organisations across different business sectors have been eager to learn new ways of enhancing the efficiency and productivity of their operations (Przytuła et al., 2020).

One of the main concepts that has been rising in the recent organisational behaviour literature is the concept of 'employee engagement' (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). This concept is used to describe employees who are eager to play vital roles in enhancing the value creation processes of their organisations (Deeb et al., 2020).

Engaged employees tend to put much effort and time for the purpose of enhancing the productivity and performance of the firms that they are working in (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). For these reasons, it is critical for organisations to search for new ways to make employee engaged in the workplace.

The extant literature proposes three dimensions of employee engagement. For instance, Shuck, Adelson and Reio (2017) argued that the concept of 'employee engagement' is used to describe employees who are cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally engaged in the workplace. Cognitive engagement (CE) refers to the degree to which employees are focused on their tasks, where they are mentally immersed and absorbed in performing their expected tasks (Joo, Zigarmi, Nimon, & Shuck, 2017). On the other hand, emotional engagement (EE) refers to the degree of affection and devotion that employees have towards their tasks and organisations (Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, & Hom, 2018). Finally, the behavioural dimension refers to a group of actions that can be seen in employees' commitment to their tasks and their exertion of the highest effort possible for the benefit of their organisations (Shuck et al., 2017).

The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and the three dimensions of employee engagement. The article focuses on five main HRM practices, which are the selection and hiring processes, training and development, job design, job security, and rewards and payment systems (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015). This is considered important because the extant literature shows some shortcomings regarding the antecedents of employee engagement (Saks, 2019). Thus, our article fills this important research gap where there is scarcity of research that examines the impact of HRM practices on employee engagement, especially in developing countries like Egypt (Soliman & Wahba, 2019). This article examines the five HRM practices for their key role in organisational success. For instance, selection and hiring processes represent an important stage for choosing the best workers who fit into the organisation and to the required tasks (Przytuła et al., 2020). On the other hand, training and development is essential to keep the task force equipped with the latest skills and knowledge required to perform their jobs (Karim, Choudhury, & Latif, 2019). Additionally, the job design plays an important role in inspiring employees and decreasing turnover rates (Oldham & Fried, 2016). Moreover, job security is essential for giving employees feelings of stability, which in turn will have a positive impact on their willingness to stay at their jobs (Reina et al., 2018). Job security is becoming very important for employees especially after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, where many companies started aggressive layoff strategies for the purpose of cost reduction (Restubog, Ocampo, & Wang, 2020).

Finally, the last HRM practice involves an effective reward and payment system which is considered one of the main factors that enhance employees' satisfaction and

commitment (Aust, Matthews, & Muller-Camen, 2020). By examining the impact of these five HRM practices on employee engagement, the present article can provide important guidelines for practitioners to follow to enhance the level of engagement of their workforce by applying effective HRM practices.

Another purpose of the current study is to examine the role of implementation of the organisational strategy on moderating the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. This is considered important because it is critical for all employees to clearly understand the mission and strategies of the organisations that they are working in (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). The extant literature shows that when employees understand the overall strategies of their organisations, they are more likely to be satisfied and loyal (Groen, Wouters, & Wilderom, 2017).

This article is organised as follows: firstly, a literature review about the concepts of human resource practices and employee engagement is introduced. The literature review section further discusses the proposed conceptual framework together with the research hypotheses. Following this, the methodology that was adopted to collect and analyse the data is presented. Then the results and discussion of key findings are introduced. Finally, the contributions, limitations and scope of further research are presented.

Literature review

The concept of employee engagement

The first formal definition for personnel engagement was provided by Kahn (1990). This definition considered it as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Likewise, Saks (2019) argued that engaged employees have high sense of responsibility, where they feel that they should enhance their performance for the sake of their organisations. Thus, engaged employees generally possess high levels of involvement and commitment towards their organisations and values (Anitha, 2014). Therefore, it is critical for organisations to enhance the level of engagement of their employees, where engaged employees are enthusiastic about their work, where they put their maximum efforts for their organisations' interests and reputation (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). In contrast, disengaged employees usually escape from doing their work tasks, where they are generally passive and would cause damaging effects to their organisations' performance (Bhebhe, 2020).

The extant literature proposes three dimensions of employee engagement, which are cognitive, emotional and behavioural. These dimensions were first proposed by Kahn (1990) when he argued that engaged employees should possess the three forms of engagement to achieve superior performance in the workplace.

Ashforth and Humphery (1995) supported this view by indicating that an engaged employee uses his or her 'hands, head and heart' when performing any task at work. These three dimensions were further examined in many later research studies that aimed at examining the nature of employee engagement in different organisations (Bakker, 2017; Budhiraja & Yadav, 2020; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

In the current study, we examine the impact of HRM practices on the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of employee engagement. Cognitive engagement refers to the degree to which employees concentrate and focus on their tasks, where they are mentally engaged and absorbed in achieving the mission of their organisations (Schuck & Wollard, 2013). Joo et al. (2017) argued that the CE is one of the main factors that enhance the psychological well-being and happiness of employees. Thus, it is very critical for organisations to search for innovative ways that enhance the CE of their workers (Lauring & Selmer, 2015). On the other hand, EE refers to the degree to which employees have positive affection towards their tasks and their organisations. It is linked to the emotions that affect employees' attitudes, whether negative or positive, towards the organisation and its top managers (Alhozi, Hawamdeh, & Al-Edenat, 2021). Employees' positive emotional experiences, as well as their relationship with their colleagues, would form meaningful connections with the organisation (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). The role of EE in enhancing the work performance has been highlighted in many articles in the field of organisational behaviour. For instance, Reina et al. (2018) argued that EE plays a critical role in decreasing the turnover rates in organisations, where employees' emotions towards their managers and their workplaces have a key role in their satisfaction at work. Finally, the behavioural dimension of engagement can be considered the physical representation of the cognitive and emotional dimensions. It can be recognised by observing employees' behaviours in the workplace (Park & Tran, 2018). These behaviours can include commitment to finishing tasks on time, being proactive and active team leaders (Amin, Ghazali, & Hassan, 2020).

Behaviourally engaged employees tend to exert the highest possible efforts at work, where they are committed to the achievement of their organisational missions (Shuck et al., 2017).

The role of human resource management practices in enhancing employee engagement

The extant literature underscores the importance of human capital in achieving superior performance and sustainability for organisations (Diaz-Carrion et al., 2021). This is in line with the view of strategic human resources scholars who argued that HRM practices can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Bogićević-Milikić, 2019; Boxall, 2018). This view has been proven empirically in numerous research studies that examined the relationship between various HRM practices and various firm-level outcomes (Boxall, 2018).

For these reasons, many companies across various business sectors have been eager to improve their HRM practices for the sake of enhancing their long-term profitability, employees' commitment and engagement (Otoo, 2019).

The relationship between various HRM practices and employee engagement has been studied in a number of academic publications (Ashill & Rod, 2011; Presbitero, 2017; Yeh, 2013). For example, Rathnaweera (2010) argued that a number of HRM practices are needed to enhance the level of engagement. These practices include proper selection and hiring policies, adequate training and development of the task force as well as effective job design that is able to match the skills of employees to the required tasks. Van Zyl, Van Eeden and Rothmann (2013) further highlighted the role of job security programmes that tend to eliminate the fears of employees from losing their jobs.

In the current article, we focus on five HRM practices as we argue that these practices are essential in enhancing employee engagement. The first HRM practice that is examined in this study is the selection and hiring. This involves the recruitment of the best candidates who fit to the job requirements (Villegas, Lloyd, Tritt, & Vengrouskie, 2019).

The literature shows some positive outcomes for the fairness in the selection and hiring process. For instance, Adam, Ogolla and Maore (2017) indicated that attracting and appointing qualified personnel is one of the most influential HRM practices that predict organisations' performance and profitability. Another HRM practice that is relevant to our study is the training and development. This practice involves providing employees with continuous training that allows them to perform their jobs in an effective and efficient manner (Karim et al., 2019). It also includes providing opportunities for self-development and career progress (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018).

Fletcher, Alfes and Robinson (2018) found that effective training and development will lead to better employee attitude and retention. The third HRM practice that is examined in our study is the job design. It involves designing work in an interesting way that inspires employees. Also, effective job design includes giving the employees flexibility to do the job in their own ways as long as they are doing it right (Oldham & Fried, 2016). Ho and Wo (2019) argued that job design is a significant predictor of employees' motivation and excellent service quality.

Furthermore, our study proposes that job security can be an antecedent of employee engagement. Job security refers to the degree that employees feel that their organisations will keep them working as long as they are able to perform their tasks. Job security is a relevant HRM practice in our study because our study is conducted in Egypt, where individuals have high degree of risk avoidance and tend to look for stability (Badran & Youssef-Morgan, 2015). In particular, after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of

job security has risen, where many organisations across different sectors tended to use downsizing strategies in order to survive during the pandemic (Wilson et al., 2020). Job insecurity is considered a major threat to employees because it gives employees a high sense of instability and stress, which negatively impacts their performance (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). The final HRM practice that is examined in our study is the rewards and payment system. Crawford et al. (2014) argued that rewards and recognition are crucial and beneficial for employee engagement. Thus, it is very essential for companies to ensure that employees are rewarded based on their performance and that they feel that the organisations provide a fair rewarding and compensation system. From the previous discussions, we present the following hypotheses:

H1: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' cognitive engagement.

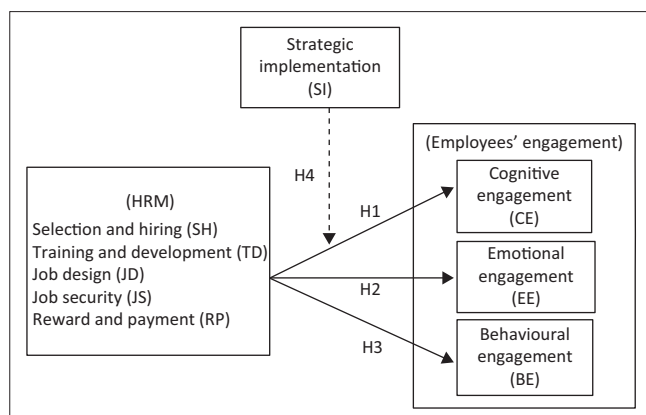
H2: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' emotional engagement.

H3: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' behavioural engagement (BE).

The moderating role of strategic implementation

The extant literature highlights the importance of strategic implementation in enhancing the effectiveness of HRM practices. For instance, Barrick et al. (2015) indicated that for HRM practices to be properly executed in organisations, there should be strong support from top management to these practices. Strategic implementation refers to top managements' willingness to execute a clear strategy that has specific strategic objectives, and to use well-defined metrics to monitor and measure the achievement of these objectives (Barrick et al., 2015). In order to achieve this, everyone in the organisation should clearly understand the strategic goals and management goals should be built on the strategic priorities of the organisation (Hitt & Ireland, 2017).

Furthermore, the management should get continuous feedback from the organisational stakeholders (Barrick et al., 2015).



HRM, human resource management.

FIGURE 1: Proposed conceptual model.

In the current study, we propose a moderating role for strategic implementation on the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement, where the literature shows the critical role of top management's support for formulating, and implementation of the strategy on HRM practices (Vance, 2006). For instance, Ho, Wu and Wu (2014) highlighted the role of top management's strategic implementation in fostering the organisations' ability to utilise their resources effectively and efficiently. From these discussions, we conclude the following hypothesis:

H4: Strategic implementation moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.

In summary, Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual model and research hypotheses.

Methodology

The current study followed a quantitative research approach by adopting the survey method. The target population of this study was employees from the banking sector in Egypt. The banking sector was chosen to study the impact of HRM practices on employee engagement for several reasons. Firstly, the banking sector is considered one of the strongest economic sectors that have contributed to the development of the Egyptian economy over the past few years (Shared, 2019). Another reason is the wide adoption of HRM practices in the Egyptian banks (Zaky & Soliman, 2017), which represent the main construct in our study. From the purpose of the data collection, a link of an online survey was posted on the LinkedIn profiles of employees who work in a number of private and public banks in Egypt. After a period of 2 months, the researchers were able to get 228 complete questionnaires. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics 25).

The questionnaire was designed based on previously validated scales, where the researchers used a five-item Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To measure selection and hiring, five items were adapted from Rathnaweera (2010). To measure training and development, four items were adapted from a study by Lee and Bruvold (2015). To measure job design, four items were adapted from Rathnaweera (2010). To measure job security, four items were adapted from Van Zyl et al. (2013). To measure rewards and payment, four items were adapted from Barrick et al. (2015). On the other hand, 10 items were adapted from Purcell (2010) to measure CE and EE. Five items were further adapted from Shuck and Reio (2014) to measure the BE. Finally, six items were adapted from Barrick et al. (2015) to measure the strategic implementation. The items of the questionnaire are displayed in Table 1.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

TABLE 1: Items of the questionnaire.

Construct	Items
HRM practice 1 (Selection and hiring)	Our recruitment system focuses on hiring the best candidates.
	It's important to our organisation to choose employees who fit to its strategic objectives.
	I think that my organisation is effective in matching employees to its operational requirements.
	Selecting workers in our organisation does not depend on favouritism.
	The recruitment system in our organisation focuses on employees' skills and qualifications.
HRM practice 2 (Training and development)	My organisation focuses on the career development of its employees.
	Career planning assistance is offered in our organisation.
	My organisation offers ongoing training for its employees.
	We are updated about job openings inside the organisation.
HRM practice 3 (Job design)	The jobs inside the organisation are designed to be inspiring.
	I am interested in the job I do.
	I have the complete freedom in doing the job in the way I think is right.
	The organisation offers me flexibility in doing the job.
HRM practice 4 (Job security)	Providing employment security is important to our organisation.
	We will stay in our jobs as long as we do it in a right manner.
	I think I will work in the same organisation for many years.
	I am not worried about quitting my job.
HRM practice 5 (Rewards and payments)	The organisation rewards its employees based on their effort and performance.
	Payments and bonuses are based on the effectiveness of the employees.
	I think that the organisation pays us fair salaries if compared to other organisations.
	I think that the payment system in the organisation is fair.
Cognitive engagement	I feel that my work is important to the organisation.
	I am focused on the work when I am in the organisation.
	During the work hours, I usually concentrate on the tasks I am doing.
	I have capabilities and resources to do the required tasks.
	I am absorbed in doing the tasks that are assigned to me.
Emotional engagement	I feel a strong emotional bond with the organisation.
	I feel proud to work for this organisation.
	I have a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.
	I am excited to do the required tasks.
Behavioural engagement	I have positive attitudes towards my organisation.
	I put the best of my knowledge in my job.
	I work very hard to achieve the tasks that are required from me.
	I work with my full power in my organisation.
Strategic implementation	I put much effort in my job.
	I feel energetic whilst doing my job.
	Our top management explains the strategic goals clearly to all employees.
	We have clearly defined metrics that show the progress of our work.
	The objectives of our teams are aligned with the objectives of the organisation.
	The management gets feedback from all stakeholders about the performance of the organisation.
Our top management seeks timely feedback from all employees about how well the organisational strategies are achieved.	
The organisation regularly monitors the achievement of the strategic objectives.	

HRM, human resource management.

Results

Demographic statistics

The analysis started by examining the descriptive statistics of the sample. The findings showed that out of the 228 respondents, 153 (67%) were men, whilst 75 (33%) were women. Also, the results indicated that 131 (57.4%) of the respondents worked in private banks, whilst 97 (42.54%) worked in public banks. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the majority of the respondents (183; 80.26%) have experience more than 10 years in the banking sector, whilst 45 respondents (19.74%) have less than 10 years of experience in the banking sector. Finally, the analysis showed that 115 (50.43%) of the respondents worked in Cairo (the capital of Egypt), 84 (36.84%) worked in Alexandria, whilst 28 (12.28%) lived in other cities.

Reliability analysis

Ensuring the reliability of the study's constructs is important before testing the research hypotheses. Thus, the analysis showed that all the study constructs possess strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha value above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Table 2 demonstrates Cronbach's alpha values of the study constructs.

Regression analysis for hypotheses testing

H1: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' cognitive engagement. (Supported)

As shown in Table 3, hypothesis 1 was supported, where the findings showed a significant effect of HRM practices on CE ($\beta = 0.564$, $p = 0.000$). Table 2 also indicates that R square = 0.318, which indicates that 31.8% of the change in CE is predicted by the five HRM practices, which are selection and hiring, training and development, job design, job security, and rewards and payment:

H2: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' emotional engagement. (Supported)

As displayed in Table 4, hypothesis 2 was supported, where the findings indicated a significant influence of HRM practices on EE ($\beta = 0.666$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, Table 3 shows that R square = 0.443, which indicates that 44.3% of the change in EE is predicted by the five HRM practices, which are selection and hiring, training and

TABLE 2: Cronbach's alpha values of the study constructs.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Selecting and hiring	0.872	5
Training and development	0.880	4
Job design	0.783	4
Job security	0.734	4
Rewards and payment	0.861	4
Strategic implementation	0.938	6
Employee' cognitive engagement	0.842	5
Employee' emotional engagement	0.914	5
Employee' behavioural engagement	0.924	5

development, job design, job security, and rewards and payments:

H3: Human resource management practices have a significant influence on employees' behavioural engagement. (Supported)

As shown in Table 5, it was found that HRM practices have a positive significant impact on BE ($\beta = 0.483$, $p = 0.000$). On the other hand, R square = 0.233, which indicates that 23.3% of the change in BE is predicted by the five HRM practices, which include selection and hiring, training and development, job design, job security, and rewards and payment:

H4: Strategic implementation moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. (Rejected)

TABLE 3a: Model summary for the predictors of cognitive engagement.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	Std. error of the estimate
Model Summary				
1	0.564 ^a	0.318	0.303	0.624

a, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

TABLE 3b: Model summary for the predictors of cognitive engagement.

Model		Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
ANOVA^a						
1	Regression	39.975	5	7.995	20.528	0.000 ^b
	Residual	85.682	220	0.389	-	-
	Total	125.656	225	-	-	-

a, Dependent variable: CE; b, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

TABLE 4a: Model summary of the predictors of emotional engagement.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	Std. error of the estimate
Model Summary				
1	0.666 ^a	0.443	0.431	0.709

a, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

TABLE 4b: Model summary of the predictors of emotional engagement.

Model		Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
ANOVA^a						
1	Regression	88.020	5	17.604	35.061	0.000 ^b
	Residual	110.461	220	0.502	-	-
	Total	198.481	225	-	-	-

a, Dependent Variable: EE; b, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

TABLE 5a: Model summary of the predictors of behavioural engagement.

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> square	Adjusted <i>R</i> square	Std. error of the estimate
Model Summary				
1	0.483 ^a	0.233	0.216	0.722

a, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

TABLE 5b: Model summary of the predictors of behavioural engagement.

Model		Sum of squares	<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
ANOVA^a						
1	Regression	34.894	5	6.979	13.403	0.000 ^b
	Residual	114.555	220	0.521	-	-
	Total	149.449	225	-	-	-

a, Dependent Variable: BE; b, Predictors: (Constant), HRM practices.

There are two models in this analysis. Model 1 shows the relationship between HRM practices, strategic implementation and employee engagement. The model is significant where $\beta = 0.632$ and $p = 0.001$. On the other hand, model 2 involves testing the moderating effect of the strategic implementation on the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. The model is significant as $p = 0.01$, whilst $\beta = 0.632$. The R square is 0.399, which indicates that 39.9% of the change in the dependent variable is predicted by the independent variables. The result of the coefficients table is that model 1 is significant but model 2 is not because the moderator effect of (CenSI*CenHRM) has a p -value equal to 0.990, which is greater than 0.05. Hence, hypothesis 4 is rejected.

Discussion

The findings underscore the importance of HRM practices in enhancing the emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of employee engagement. In particular, the article highlights the role of five important HRM practices which are selection and hiring, training and development, job design, job security, and rewards and payment. These findings are in line with the findings of some articles that showed the critical importance of HRM practices in enhancing employee engagement. For instance, Aktar and Pangil (2017) indicated that a variety of HRM practices, such as the job security and career development, are important to enhance the level of engagement. These findings have also been confirmed in the work of Jose (2012), which indicated that the level of employee engagement is determined by the level of satisfaction with the human resource practices.

Our findings provide an important contribution to the literature about employee engagement. For instance, the findings showed the importance of selection and hiring in enhancing the level of engagement. This view was supported in the literature, which indicated that the recruitment process plays an important role in predicting employees' active engagement in the workplace (Bhutta & Zafar, 2019). Additionally, our findings highlighted the role of training and development in enhancing employee engagement. These findings have been supported by the work of Mansour (2020) which showed that the level of employee engagement depends on the training that employees get access to in the workplace. Another interesting finding of this article is the importance of job security in enhancing engagement levels of employees. This result finds much support in several empirical studies which indicated that employees' perceptions of insecurity in the workplace will lead to poor performance and high levels of disengagement (Chen, 2018; Ugwu & Okojie, 2016). The importance of providing job security to employees has grown in importance, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Wilson et al., 2020). Our article shows the importance of providing job security, especially in counties like Egypt, where employees are generally looking for stability, where Egyptians, in general, are less likely to change their jobs and companies (Soliman & Wahba, 2019).

Our findings further underscore the importance of job design and reward systems in improving employee engagement. These findings are consistent with that of Tims and Bakker (2014), which showed that well-designed jobs can be inspiring for employees and can largely contribute to their level of engagement. Also, they are consistent with the findings of Waqas and Saleem (2014) that highlighted the role of monetary and non-monetary rewards in increasing the level of employee engagement and performance of organisations. However, our findings showed that strategic implementation does not moderate the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. This might be attributed to the lack of knowledge that employees have about the strategies and objectives of the Egyptian banks. These findings are not in line with the findings of Barrick et al. (2015) which showed that strategic implementation plays an important role in increasing employees' performance and productivity. Thus, it is apparent that the majority of Egyptian banks have been unsuccessful in explaining their strategies to employees.

Implications to theory and practice

This article responds to several calls from management scholars for studying the factors that enhance employee engagement (Bhutta & Zafar, 2019; Jose, 2012). Through an empirical study by drawing a sample of employees from the banking sector in Egypt, this article was able to show the significant role of various HRM practices in enhancing employee engagement. Our study contributes by being one of the first studies that examine how HRM practices impact employee engagement in Egypt as an example of developing countries. Furthermore, the current study contributes by examining the three dimensions of employee engagement that were proposed by Shuck et al. (2017). This is considered important, where investigating the different facets of engagement provides a detailed explanation of the relatively new concept in the field of organisational behaviour studies.

Our study also provides some important guidelines for HR managers in the banking sector to follow in order to be able to enhance employee engagement. Firstly, organisations should ensure that they have effective hiring and selection policies. By doing this, they will be able to attract the best candidates that fit to the organisational culture. Another importance of this practice lies in the fact that when employees perceive that selection and hiring is conducted fairly, they will feel that their organisations apply fair HRM practices, which subsequently enhances their engagement. Also, organisations should not neglect the importance of continuous training and development of their staff. This is becoming very important with the new technological innovations that are introduced in the banking sector. Effective training that equips employees with relevant skills can make them more satisfied whilst doing their daily tasks. Another important HRM practice that should be developed is the job design. This could be conducted by designing jobs in a way that is flexible and decentralised, where employees should be given more freedom to do their tasks in their own way as long as they are doing it right. Furthermore,

organisations should increase the perception of the job security by their employees, especially in countries like Egypt, where employees tend to have high risk avoidance. This HRM practice is becoming more important with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, where many employees have high fears to be forced to leave their jobs. Also, organisations should provide fair compensation and reward systems that are based on performance. This is critical, where the findings showed the importance of this HRM practice in enhancing employee engagement. Finally, organisations should make sure to focus on internal marketing practices that ensure the alignment of all employees to the strategic objectives. This can be conducted by providing awareness sessions to employees about the mission statements, strategic objectives and key performance indicators of their organisations.

Research limitations and directions for future research

Despite the fact that this article provides important contributions to theory and practice, it has some limitations. Firstly, the article only examined the impact of five HRM practices on employee engagement. Future studies can further examine some other important HRM practices, such as the quality of work environment and work safety. Another limitation of our study is that it only examined employees working in one industry, that is, the banking sector in Egypt. Future studies can draw samples from other industries in different countries, where they can investigate how culture can impact the acceptance of HRM practices. Also, future studies can investigate each of the HRM practices separately to be able to provide a comparison of the impact of each of them on employee engagement. Furthermore, future studies can adopt qualitative approaches, which will provide an in-depth understanding of the factors that enhance employee engagement. Finally, further research is needed to examine how internal marketing practices influence employee engagement, especially in developing countries like Egypt.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

This article was written by a team of researchers from the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport. M.M.S. had a key role in data collection, data analysis and writing the first draft of the article. H.G. and A.L. had key roles in revising the article and responding to reviewers' comments.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data are available within the article or its supplementary materials, and other data are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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