

HUMAN RESOURCE BEST PRACTICES SCALE

Developing a Human Resource-Best Practices Scale for Pakistani General Public Sector

Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to develop a scale for identifying the effectiveness of Human Resource Practices (HRPs) in general public sector universities in Pakistan. The development of the research instrument was done very carefully, keeping in view all the intricacies and specifications taken from literature review. The prevailing scenario of the higher educational institutes of Pakistan was always kept in mind during the research scale development process. The research scale encompassed the six categories of HRMPs namely recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, and working environment. The research instrument was validated through peer review and with the help of experts' opinions in the field. Finally, a pool of 34 statements was developed. Two hundred and fifty (250) faculty members from different faculties, gender, designation, qualification, teaching experience and age, filled the questionnaire. The overall Cronbach Alpha was found 0.937, whereas for each factor, alpha ranged from 0.598 to 0.927. The positive, strong and significant correlation was found among the six components of the HRBP's indicating the uni-dimensionality of the scale.

Introduction

It is an admitted fact that Human Resources (HR's) are very important factor for any institution. The effective utilisation of HR's paves the path to achieve institutional goals and ultimately the success of an institution. Institutes should also attain their competitive advantage through the effective and efficient use of these resources. Since the last few decades practitioners and intellectuals in the field of management have been seeking for those HRP's through which utilise these resources more effectively and organization get more positive and better results from their employees. To use HR's effectively it is necessary for the institutes to execute effective HR practices. Without effective execution of HRP's, an organization not only wastes its time but also a lot of money and other resources. To save precious time and money of the organizations researchers have reported different typologies. These typologies have been discussed in literature review sections. They named these typologies as HR best practices.

To identify the practices which have been practiced in organizations, different research tools have been available. By using these research tools organizations come to know about the picture of management practices that were executed in an organizations and also know at what extent these practices are executed effectively. Most of the research tools for identifying these practices available in literature are developed for corporate sector. Unfortunately very little researches have been done in public sector.

In this modern world where quality education is the top priority for the countries, HRP's should be practiced effective in educational institutes particularly in Higher Educational Institutes (HEI's). The era where the physical resources are not a big deal for HEI's but the difference is due to Human Resources (HR's), it is more important to pay full attention in this area. So, it is the critical issue for today's administrators is to search out the schemes for

organizing their HR's in such a way that competence of the institute should retain and competitive advantage should attain.

Effective executions of Human Resource Management Practices (HRMP's) are indispensable for the effective utilization of institutional employees. The finding of different research studies regarding HRMP's show that these practices have a great potential to enhance institutional effectiveness. There are lot of research studies recorded that measure the outcomes of HRBP's like institutional' performance/ employees' performance/ work' performance/ organizational' performance/ employees' commitment/ organizational' commitment/ job' commitment, etc. Most of the research studies are correlational or causal-comparative. But unfortunately a dearth of research literature is available to identifying the effective execution of HRP's, especially in educational institutes. None of the research instrument is available to identify the effective execution of HRBP's and explore/analyse the prevailing situation in general public sector universities in Pakistan.

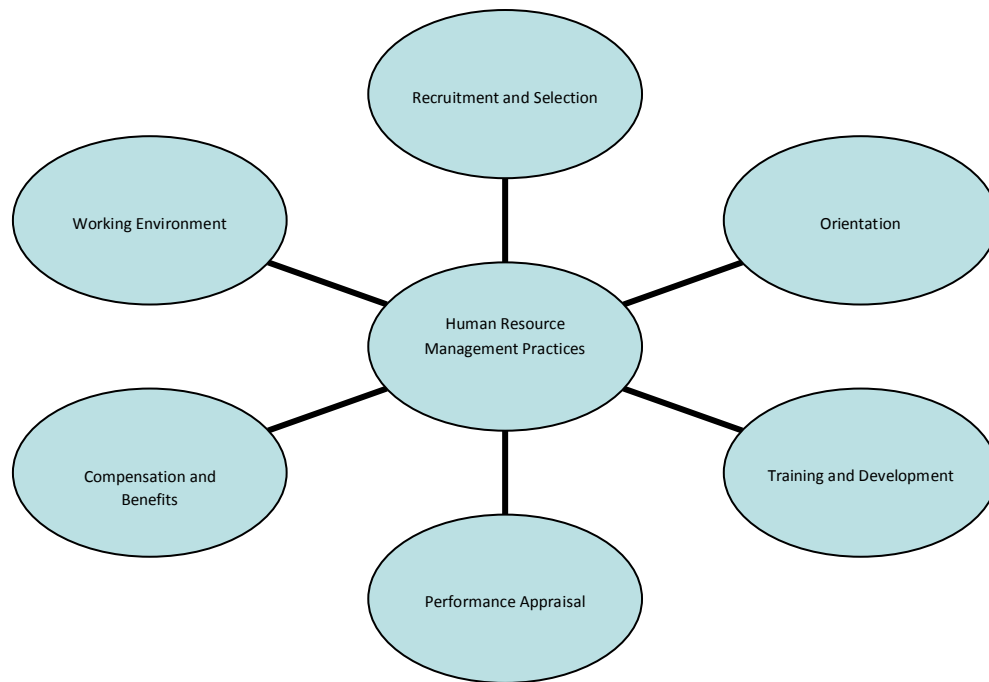
HRMP's are needed to be identified to know about the weaknesses which exist in the present system and search out the loopholes that create hindrances in effective human resource management. Majority of scales regarding HRMP's reported in the literature are measuring the impact of HRMP's or identifying the outcomes of these practices particularly in the corporate sector and very little research conducted in the educational sector especially in Pakistan.

Review Literature

HRBP's is considered to be a complex construct which can be divided across various dimensions. Researchers have enlisted a number of categories that contribute to HRBP's. Some of these typologies are given here:

According to Delery and Doty (1996) there are seven best human resource management practices that are internal career opportunities, formal training systems, appraisal measures, profit sharing, employment security, voice mechanisms, and job definition. Pfeffer (1998) also identifies seven best human resource practices of successful organizations but differently from the earlier typology. These comprise employment security, self-managed team/s (autonomy), extensive training (training), high compensation contingent on organizational performance (reward), selective hiring (recruitment), sharing of information (involvement), and status differences. Fiorito, Bozeman, Young, and Meurs (2007) classify HRBP's into ten categories i.e. internal labour markets, hiring selectivity, training, grievance resolution mechanisms, benefits, employee involvement, incentive pay, union pressure, compensation cuts, and downsizing.

For the present study, the researchers have classified the HRBP's into six categories following the framework of Dessler (2006). The figure graphically represents these six components of HRBP's.



Further theoretical and empirical in detailed discussion in the light of literature review is discussed below.

Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection involve the process of attracting and selecting people to serve in an institute or organization. Dowling, Schuler and Welch (1994) define this process as ‘searching for and obtaining potential job candidates in sufficient numbers and quality so that the organization can select the most appropriate people to fill its job needs’. The institutions make an inventory of the dimensions of knowledge and skills pre-requisite to be hired for the job. Its importance is highlighted by Byars and Rue (1997) saying that it is the top priority of institutions to select the right person for the right job as institutional performance always depends on its employees. The better is this process; the better the performance of the institute is expected to be. In the same way, the faulty execution of this process will be the cause of ‘loss of competitive advantage, impaired image and reputation, and the loss of other key staff’ (Dowling, 1988).

It has been studied that the organizations perform better when the selection method is comprehensive (Terpstra & Rozell, 1993; U.S. Department of Labor, 1993). Thus, the researchers (Gardner, Foo, & Hesketh, 1995; Guion, 1991) have drawn attention to the comprehensibility of this process. In this way, realistic job previews help in deciding about the suitability of the candidates.

According to the Karpin (1995), there are nine strategies that qualify for the best practice in an academic recruitment and selection; a detailed information package, the salary package and appointment specifications, the recruitment methods, the composition of selection committee, a detailed timetable for selection, decisions on selection methods, individuals' subsequent performance appraisal, trained recruiters and the process review.

Orientation

Once the right people are selected for the job, the organization needs to guide them towards the proper execution of their roles. Orientation is 'the process of informing new employees about what is expected of them on the job and helping them cope with the stresses of transition' (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy, 1998). The orientation may be in the form of brief and informal introductions or the lengthy and formal courses to introduce the new recruits to the rules and regulations and policies of the organization, its hierarchical structure and to the expectations of the organization. The orientation aims at welcoming the new recruits and making them feel at home. According to DeCenzo and Robbins (2002), the aim of any orientation program is to

'familiarize the new member with the organization's objectives, history, philosophy, procedures, and rules; communicated relevant human resource management policies such as work hours, pay procedures, benefits; review the specific duties and

responsibilities of the new member's job; provide a tour of the organization's physical facilities; and introduce the employee to his/her manager and co-workers'. (p.)

The importance of orientation cannot be underestimated. The absence of orientation process or its improper execution may create confusions in the minds of new employees and they may commit take more time in performance of their tasks or may commit dangerous errors because of their over cautious behaviour. This results in low performance of the organization. Dessler (2006) points out four outcomes of successful orientations; making new employees at ease, introducing them to the history and vision of the organization and its policies and procedures, clarifying the expectations of the organization from the recruits and lastly, socializing them into behaviour of the organization.

In the educational settings, the newly selected teachers also need orientation from the administration. They need guidance on rules and regulations of their employment, administrative hierarchy, the method of assessing their performance, the mission statement and goals and objectives of their organization. Some of the information, they may find in the university hand-book.

Training and Development

In order to transform the new recruits into effective and productive employees, they must be integrated into the organizations. Their abilities and skills need to be expanded and polished through activities like training and development. Dessler (2006) refers to training as methods that are applied to provide the new recruits with the skills needed to perform their duties. The term 'development' refers to broadening horizon of the employees. Ivancevich (2001) believes that the development activities help a person make positive contributions to the organizations. The focus of training is the current job while the focus of development is

expansion of their current knowledge and growth. Both training and development are the key factors in maintaining the performance of individuals in an organization.

Comprehensive training and development programs have been proven to be important ingredients of efficient performance (Terpstra & Rozell, 1993; U.S. Department of Labor, 1993). One important study in this regard was done in Russia tells that training gives an organization, the competitive advantage (Jukov & Korotov, 1998; Shekshnia, 1998). Another study of 18 Western organizations also emphasized the competence development in general and training in particular (Fey et al., 1999). Consequently, there is said to be strong relationship between employee training and organizational performance (Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Koch & McGrath, 1996).

Performance Appraisal

Another important human resource management practice is performance appraisal. It aims to evaluate the current and the past performance of the employees based on the performance standards with the view 'to improve performance' (Dessler, 2006). It ensures that the employees 'stay focused on effective performance' (Benardin & Russell, 1998). Moser, Schuler & Funke (1999) includes observation and judgment in the performance appraisal. It may be used to reward the individuals whose performance is better than others. Thus, it evaluates the work of the employees as well as motivates them to improve their future performance. This provides an opportunity to the employees to identify the skills that they need to acquire in order to progress within the organization (Cleveland, Murphy & Williams, 1989).

The employees whose performance is being assessed must be involved in the whole process. They must have their say even in developing the system of performance appraisal. There is

strong evidence that their participation in developing appraisal system ‘leads to favourable reactions to the process and actually increase trust for top management’ (Mayer & Davis, 1999). This sense of possession develops the satisfaction of the subordinates with the appraisal interview, the appraisal system and motivates them to improve their performance (Cawley & Keeping, 1998). Performance appraisal is important as it is an integral part of an organization’s performance management process. In order to manage this process well, it is important to conduct performance appraisal every six to twelve months (Anthony, Kacmar, & Perrewe, 2002).

Compensation and Benefits

All forms of pay or rewards that institutions give to employees in exchange of their work are referred to as compensation and benefits (Williams, 2005). Compensation is the activity of human resource management function through which employees get every type of reward in return of performing the tasks assigned by the administration (Hackett & McDermott, 1999). There is precedence of various employees being paid variably for the same job. This variance appeared judicious in terms of individual differences in experience, skills, and performance as well as expectations that seniority, higher performance, or both deserve higher pay. In Asian scenario, it has been noticed that the seniority system has influenced wage setting. There is ample evidence available to declare the demise of lifetime employment, seniority wages and age based promotions (Ornatowski, 1998). Hackett and McDermott (1999) stated that total compensation includes the following three elements:

1. Basic pay is matched closely to competition, according to the organization's ability to pay and attract quality talent. Basic pay serves as a platform for variable pay.

2. Variable pay is the centre piece of the total compensation approach. Methods include gain-sharing, lump-sum bonuses, individual variable pay, and so forth. It is flexible and links the future of the organization and the employee in a positive manner.
3. Indirect pay adds cost-effective benefits keyed to supporting the goals of the organization.

It is said that the performance of the employees improves through compensation and benefits (Bateman & Snell, 2007; Cherrington, 1995). There are other advantages of compensation and benefits as well; the desire to retain the employment (Aoki, 1988; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000; Delery & Doty, 1996; Kochan, Wells, & Smith, 1992) the increase in motivation (Appelbaum & Mackenzie, 1996; Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000) and job satisfaction (Buchko, 1993; Poole and Jenkins, 1990). On the other hand, if an organization pays less to its employees in comparison with other organizations of the same nature, the employees are likely to become dissatisfied and possibly leave the organization (Roberts, 1997) as employees tend to compare their remuneration with that of other people in the same or a similar situation.

Appelbaum and MacKenzie (1996) highlighted the fact that the organizations are introducing innovative compensation strategies have direct relationship with improvement in organizational performance. In order to maximize the profits of the system of compensation and benefits, fairness of the system is a pre-requisite. Gilliland and Langdon (1998) contended that this condition can be accomplished by adhering to four important practice; 1) conducting surveys or interviews to know the opinion of the employees, 2) communicating clearly the rewarding procedures and treating all employees consistently when seeking input 3) including the rewards that employees are really concerned about and 4) explaining clearly the rules and logic of the rewards process.

Working Conditions

If the working conditions of an institution/organization are conducive, its performance will improve dramatically. The working conditions are conducive when administration provides their employees to safe and healthy environment. Byars and Rue (1997) identify the safety and health as important concerns of the organizations today. The responsibility lies with the organizations that they must provide safe and healthy working environment to the employees and protect them from smoking, alcohol and drug/substance abuse, stress, and burnout. Mondy and Noe (2005) define safety as ‘protecting employees from injuries caused by work-related accidents and health as keeping employees free from physical or emotional illness’.

Employment security is one of the important parts of HRM practices (Delery & Doty, 1996; Pfeffer, 1995). It is generally believed that only if the employers feel that their jobs are secured, they will cooperate and increase their efficiency otherwise, they will withdraw their responsibilities. Thus, job or employment security plays a decisive role in harmonizing the interests of the employers and employees in a long-term mutual commitment relationship. It is particularly important in the context of human resource management system (Applebaum & Batt, 1994; Kochan & Osterman, 1994; Levine, 1995; and Pfeffer, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to construct/develop and validate a research tool to measure the perception of academia about the execution of HRBP's in general public sector universities in Pakistan because employees are in the best position to describe the management practices in use (Guest, 2002; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, & Allen, 2005). In addition, the relationship between different components of HRBP's was also examined through this research scale.

Methodology

This section describes the details regarding the participants, sampling procedure, stages of research instrument development, validation of research instrument, factor analysis and correlation between different components of HRBP's. Sampling Procedure

One university from general public sector universities was randomly selected, i.e. University of the Punjab, Lahore.

The sample was comprised of 250 permanent faculty members from 539 permanent faculty members. They were selected through simple random sampling technique.

Development of the Research Instrument

Following the frame work of Dessler (2006) and with the help of questionnaires already developed, that was Kwan (2009) and Texas State (2008), eight HRBP's were identified according to Pakistani general public sector universities scenario. That is human resource planning, recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, employees' relations, and working conditions.

A group of ten university teachers were conveniently selected for open ended interview regarding HRBP's. After conducting the interview the researcher was realised that university teachers have very little or even no information about first HR practice i.e., Human resource planning. Researchers also felt that they are hesitate or reluctant to provide information about another HR practice i.e., employees' relations. So, only six HRP's were selected i.e., recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, and working conditions.

Eighty (80) statements were initially developed after the extensive review of related literature to identify mentioned above HRBPs. One of the statements was directly adopted from the existing scale (Kwan, 2009) that was; “I am fairly rewarded for the stress and strains of my job” and further two statements were adapted according to the context. The remaining statements were developed by the researcher.

Validation of Research Instrument

To validate the research tool researcher was go for a peer review. After the thorough consultation with peers that are Ph.D. scholars and have a more than five years’ experience in teaching at university level, twenty statements were removed. Then the researcher went to English language experts for grammatical correction. When the language is grammatically corrected the research instrument was sent to subject experts. After the feedback of subject experts, twenty six more statements were removed and four statements were rephrased.

After the validation of research instrument it was named Human Resource-Best Practices Scale (HR-BPS). To check the reliability of HR-BPS, pilot testing of this research tool was administered by researcher himself. Each statement had a five-point likert response, i.e. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Procedure

Two hundred and fifty faculty members were selected through simple random sampling technique. Two hundred and forty one respondents were filled the HR-BPS and only nine respondents were refused to fill this.

Reliability score was measured through Cronbach’s Alpha i.e., 0.937. It shows that HR-BPS is highly reliable for identifying the HRBP’s in general public sector universities in Pakistan.

Factor Analysis

The rotated component matrix factor analysis was used to ensure the construct validity of the research scale/tool. 62.175% of variance was explained by loading the statements on six component/factors. The loading of the statements with their component is given in table 1.

Table 1

Rotated Component Matrix (a), Loading of Statements with their Component

		Component					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
	The university mission statement was clearly communicated to me at the time of joining.	.79					
	I was comprehensively briefed about the university structure (administrative hierarchy) after joining.	.77					
	I was comprehensively briefed about all university goals and objectives during the orientation session.	.76					
	After joining this university, I was communicated all rules and regulations related to my job.	.74					
	After joining this university, I was clearly communicated the criteria on which my performance would be evaluated.	.69					
	I was formally introduced to all colleagues of the department when I joined this university.	.60					
	The university adopts standardised procedures for	.45					

appraising my teaching performance.	2				
Appraisal is completed by the persons who are	.44				
completely familiar with my work performance.	1				
I am paid appropriate salary according to my	.89				
responsibilities.	4				
I am fairly paid according to my qualification.	.86				
	1				
I am appropriately compensated according to my	.82				
experience.	3				
I am reasonably remunerated for the amount of effort I	.82				
put in.	0				
I am fairly rewarded for the stresses and strains of my	.65				
job.	0				
The staff' development activities organized by the	.79				
university are linked with my professional needs.	3				
The staff' development activities organized by the	.78				
university improved my teaching performance.	5				
Teachers' training course organized by the university is	.70				
directly linked to the university goals and objectives.	1				
The university provides me opportunities to undertake	.65				
relevant educational courses.	1				
After teachers' training course, the university asked me	.58				
for formal feedback about the effectiveness of the	6				
training course.					
The university encourages me to undertake relevant	.58				

professional training courses.	2			
My health has not suffered due to my job at this university.		.70		
I feel no difficulty in balancing my work and personal life at this university.		.69		
Complaints of workplace violence are investigated by the university adequately.		.66		
The university is actively involved in handling my safety complaints.		.63		
Working environment is very pleasant in my university.		.56		
My employment is completely secured with this university.		.46		
Vacancies for the teachers are properly advertised in my university.		.36		
The interview panel adequately tested my skills for the required post before the selection.			.85	
Before the selection, interview panel assessed my knowledge thoroughly for the required post.			.84	
Discrimination of any kind is not involved in the selection process in my university.			.55	
Before the selection of my present post, I knew complete job requirements.			.39	
I feel that teachers' appraisal is just a formality in my university.				.74
				3

The university gives me formal feedback after appraising my performance.										.59
										5
My performance is regularly evaluated by the university after each session/semester.										.49
										4
In my university, internal politics plays an important role in teachers' selection process.										.45
										9

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The statement number 8, 11, 9, 7, 12, 10, 22 and 21 loaded on the component 1 (Orientation) explaining 13.55% of variance. The statement number 26, 24, 25, 27 and 28 loaded on the component 2 (Compensation and Benefits) explaining 12.01% of variance. The statement number 15, 16, 17, 14, 18 and 13 loaded on the component 3 (Training and Development) explaining 11.495% of variance. The statement number 31, 32, 34, 33, 29, 30 and 1 loaded on the component 4 (Working Environment) explaining 11.48% of variance. The statement number 4, 3, 5 and 2 loaded on the component 5 (Recruitment and Selection) explaining 7.22% of variance. The statement number 23, 20, 19 and 6 loaded on the component 6 (Performance Appraisal) explaining 6.43% of variance.

In factor analysis statement number 22 and 21 loaded at the component 1, statement number 1 loaded at the component 4 and the statement number 6 loaded at the component 6 but in the light of subject matter experts' opinion and theoretical support statement number 22 and 21 belongs to the component 6, statement number 1 belongs to the component 5 and the statement number 6 belongs to the component 5.

Table 2 shows the correlation among the various factors that contribute to HRM. The table shows that the correlation between recruitment and selection and orientation and recruitment and selection and training and development was significant and strong as well. There was strong and significant correlation recorded of recruitment and selection with performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and working environment. The HRM practice of Orientation also showed strong as well as significant correlation with all the other HRM practice like training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and working environment. The mutual correlation of the all the other HRM practices was also found to be simultaneously significant and strong.

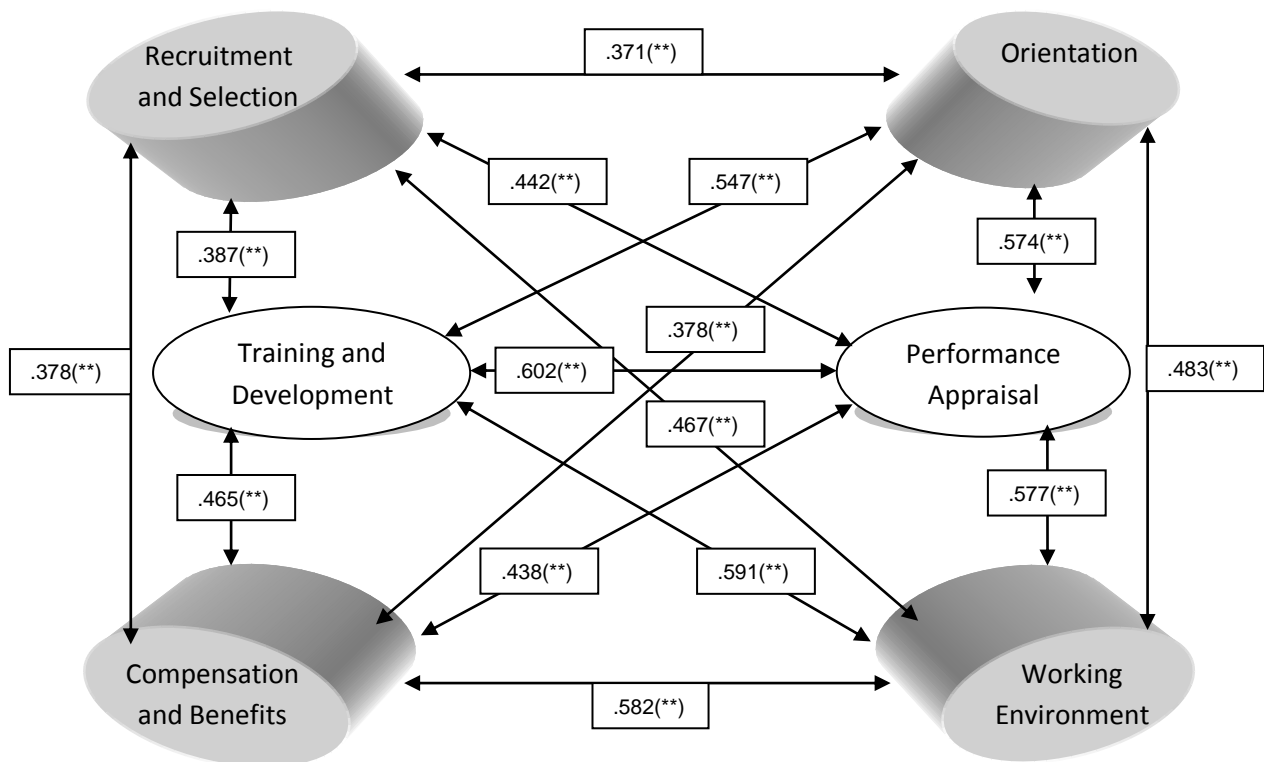
Table 2: Correlations between different Components

Components	Orientation		Training and Development		Performance Appraisal		Compensation and Benefits		Working Environment	
	r	ig.	r	ig.	r	ig.	r	ig.	R	ig.
Recruitment and Selection	.371(**)	.000	.387(**)	.000	.442(**)	.000	.378(**)	.000	.467(**)	.000
Orientation			.547(**)	.000	.574(**)	.000	.397(**)	.000	.483(**)	.000
Training and Development					.602(**)	.000	.465(**)	.000	.591(**)	.000
Performance Appraisal							.438(**)	.000	.577(**)	.000
Compensation and Benefits									.582(**)	.000

N=241

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

Correlation Graphic representation



Conclusion

The research scale that is being developed has six categories of HRMPs namely recruitment and selection, orientation, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, and working environment. The research instrument was validated through peer review and with the help of experts' opinions in the field. Finally, a poll of 34 statements was developed. Two hundred and fifty (250) faculty members from different faculties, gender, designation, qualification, teaching experience and age, filled the questionnaire. The overall Cronbach Alpha was found 0.937, whereas for each factor, alpha ranged from 0.598 to 0.927. The positive, strong and significant correlation was found among the six components of the HRBP's indicating the uni-dimensionality of the scale. So, it can be concluded that the research instrument is appropriate for assessing the conditions of HRM practices in the general public sector universities.

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Appendix: Human Resource-Best Practices Scale for Pakistani General Public Sector Universities					
Human Resource-Best Practices Scale for Pakistani General Public Sector Universities	1	2	3	4	5
The university mission statement was clearly communicated to me at the time of joining. I was comprehensively briefed about the university structure (administrative hierarchy) after joining. I was comprehensively briefed about all university goals and objectives during the orientation session. After joining this university, I was communicated all rules and regulations related to my job.					

<p>After joining this university, I was clearly communicated the criteria on which my performance would be evaluated.</p> <p>I was formally introduced to all colleagues of the department when I joined this university.</p> <p>The university adopts standardised procedures for appraising my teaching performance.</p> <p>Appraisal is completed by the persons who are completely familiar with my work performance.</p> <p>I am paid appropriate salary according to my responsibilities.</p> <p>I am fairly paid according to my qualification.</p> <p>I am appropriately compensated according to my experience.</p> <p>I am reasonably remunerated for the amount of effort I put in.</p> <p>I am fairly rewarded for the stresses and strains of my job.</p> <p>The staff' development activities organized by the university are linked with my professional needs.</p> <p>The staff' development activities organized by the university improved my teaching performance.</p> <p>Teachers' training course organized by the university is directly linked to the university goals and objectives.</p> <p>The university provides me opportunities to undertake relevant educational courses.</p> <p>After teachers' training course, the university asked me for formal feedback about the effectiveness of the training course.</p> <p>The university encourages me to undertake relevant professional training courses.</p> <p>My health has not suffered due to my job at this university.</p> <p>I feel no difficulty in balancing my work and personal life at this university.</p> <p>Complaints of workplace violence are investigated by the university adequately.</p> <p>The university is actively involved in handling my safety complaints.</p> <p>Working environment is very pleasant in my university.</p> <p>My employment is completely secured with this university.</p> <p>Vacancies for the teachers are properly advertised in my university.</p> <p>The interview panel adequately tested my skills for the required post before the selection.</p> <p>Before the selection, interview panel assessed my knowledge thoroughly for the required post.</p> <p>Discrimination of any kind is not involved in the selection process in my university.</p> <p>Before the selection of my present post, I knew complete job requirements.</p> <p>I feel that teachers' appraisal is just a formality in my university.</p> <p>The university gives me formal feedback after appraising my performance.</p> <p>My performance is regularly evaluated by the university after each session/semester.</p> <p>In my university, internal politics plays an important role in teachers' selection process.</p>					
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