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HR LINE MANAGER'S REFLECTIONS ON HRM EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH HR ROLES AND ROLE STRESSORS

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the relationship between HR roles and HR role stressors in determining the effectiveness of HRM. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to examine the link between 1) the HR roles (administrative expert, employee champion change agent, and strategic partner) and HR role stressors (role ambiguity and role overload), as well as HRM effectiveness (strategic HRM effectiveness and technical HRM effectiveness) and 2) HR role stressors and HRM effectiveness. A massive primary survey was conducted which involved 153 line managers from Malaysian manufacturing companies. The data were analyzed through structural equation modelling (SEM) via Smart PLS. The significant findings of the study revealed that the roles of the change agent and strategic partner influence perceived HR role ambiguity while the employee champion role influenced HR role overload and all dimension of HR roles influence all dimensions of strategic HRM effectiveness. Moreover, the employee champion role and strategic partner role influenced technical HRM effectiveness and HR overload influenced technical HRM effectiveness.

Keywords: *HR roles, HR role stressors, HRM effectiveness*

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INTRODUCTION

Current research on strategic human resource management (HRM) in Asia has normally involved the transference and adaptation of Western management models to the Asian business environmental behaviour (Chatterjee & Nankervis 2007; Stanton & Nankervis, 2011). In this regard, the agility of Malaysian human resource (HR) practitioners in developing and practising local adaptations of Western strategic HR/human capital (HC) management models is a necessity for technology and knowledge-based industries. Understanding the changes in diversity in the nature of global and local workforces so as to accommodate the needs of ever-changing technology and knowledge-based industries is vital. Hence,

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critically evaluating the implications and consistently improving on the local adaptation of strategic HRM is timely and necessary. A company that does not adopt strategic HRM to its operations will have difficulties in sustaining its business growth and effectiveness (Mukulu, Kahiri & Waigunjo, 2012). Based on this argument, Cooke, Shen and McBride (2005) have asserted that strategic HRM is an efficient function that copes with changes in the internal and external business environments. In line with this focus, this study attempts to improve on the recent studies done in Malaysia based on Ulrich's (1997) research on the linkage between HR roles and line managers involvement in HR activities (Choi, Wan Khairuzzaman & Salmah, 2011; De Guzman, Neelankavil, & Sengupta, 2011; Yusliza, 2010; Yusliza, Ramayah, & Hazman, 2012)

Even though the functions of HRM may differ within different organizations, twenty-first century HR managers in Malaysia are expected to play a key role in helping their organizations to meet their business objectives through the the appropriate management of staff members (Tan, 2011). Hence, it is of paramount importance for HR practitioners to adopt a strategic HR/HC management system from developed Western and Asian countries and adapt that shystem to HR roles in the Malaysian context. The reason for focusing on the manufacturing industry in this study is because manufacturing is Malaysia's second largest employment sector, emplying 3.76 million people in 2013, representing 29.4 per cent of the total employment in Malaysia. Moreover, the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to be the second largest, totaling up to RM 232.5 (Economic Planning Unit, 2018).

The aim of this study is to verify whether the adopted HR model application, the "HR roles" typology (Ulrich, 1997), can be adapted for the proposed theoretical research framework through studying the relationships between HR roles (Choi et al., 2011; De Guzman et al., 2011; De Stefano, Bagdadli, & Camuffo, 2018; Kohont, & Brewster, 2014; Srimannarayana, 2012; Yau & Han, 2010; Yusliza, 2010; Yusliza et al., 2012), HR Role stressors (Evans, 2017; Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008; Gilbert, De Winne, & Sels, 2011a, 2011b), and HRM effectiveness (Bainbridge, 2015; Chew & Basu, 2005; Collins, 2007; Guest & Conway, 2011; Huselid, Jackson & Schuler, 1997; Malik & Aminu, 2011; Nik Mat, Zabidi, & Salleh, 2015; Obeidat, 2016; Ordonez de Pablos & Lytras, 2008; Rimi, Yusliza, Walters, & Rubel,. 2017; Osman, Theresa, & Galang, 2011; Wang & Shyu, 2008).

Based on the available knowledge, the following gaps remain in the current literature. First, previous empirical studies have examined HR roles in relationship to organisational commitment (Bhatnagar, 2007; Shipton, Sanders, Atkinson, & Frenkel, 2016), psychological empowerment (Bhatnagar, 2007), organisational learning capability, (Bhatnagar, 2007; Bhatnagar & Sharma, 2005), empowerment of line managers in HR activities (Yusliza & Hazman, 2008; Yusliza et al., 2012), HRM effectiveness (Yusliza, Hazman, & Aniah, 2010), internal consultation skill and linkage (Choi et al., 2011), competencies of HR managers (Kohont & Brewster, 2014; Prikshat, Kumar, Nankervis, & Khan, 2018; Prikshat, Salleh, & Nankervis, 2016), organisational competitiveness (Yau & Han, 2010), globalisation and culture for HRM (Friedman, 2007), and research links with Ulrich's (1997) HR role typologies (Welch & Welch, 2012).

Second, Gilbert et al. (2011b) investigated the impact of HR devolution characteristics, and personal characteristics of front-managers on the perceptions of front-line managers of HR role stressors. Gilbert et al. (2011b) suggested further research to study the specific antecedent (i.e., HR roles) and consequence (i.e., HRM effectiveness). As this is an important gap to be filled, this study investigates the assessment of line managers of HR roles (administrative expert, employee champion, change agent, and strategic partner), HR role stressors (role ambiguity and role overload), and HRM effectiveness (strategic HRM effectiveness and technical HRM effectiveness).

The results of the research could help HR managers to create better HR policies and practices that clearly define the scope and expectations of the shared HR role responsibilities with the line managers for delivering more effective HR roles. Improved strategic HR policies and practices should increase HRM effectiveness, which would lead to "economy of scale" in the manufacturing companies in Malaysia. The hope is that these findings will provide local ideas and local practical significance to add to strategic HR practices that have emanated from Western settings. The objective of this study is that finding this approach will serve as a better guide to a develop a stronger Malaysian HR system.

This study will present a review of the theoretical background of HR role theory and HR role model before describing the specific hypotheses followed by the key features of the study, its sample, data collection, analysis and results. Subsequent sections highlight the discussion, implications, and conclusion of the study.

ROLE THEORY AND HR ROLES

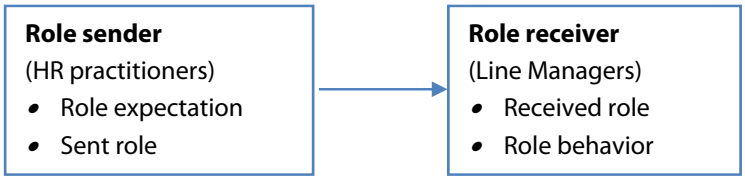
The present study uses the principle of role theory (Figure 1) by inserting the newly adopted Ulrich (1997) HR role model (Table 1) and the processes for attaining global agility, effectiveness, and competitiveness. Katz and Kahn (1978) explained that, in role theory, human behavior is guided by expectations held both by an individual and by other people. HR practitioners act as the role-senders and line managers act as "role-receivers".

The representative sample of recent published studies (Choi et al. 2011; Yusliza et al., 2012; De Guzman et al., 2011; Yusliza, 2010; Prikshat et al., 2016, 2018) in Asian countries shows that the adopted Ulrich (1997) HR role model (Table 1) is relevant and can be adapted into the Asian strategic HRM context.

Figure 2 below illustrates the research framework applied in this study:

The major area of interest is the "HR role stressors". In the present study, when HR practitioners devolve

Figure 1: Organisation Roles



Source: Katz & Kahn (1978)

Figure 2: Research Framework

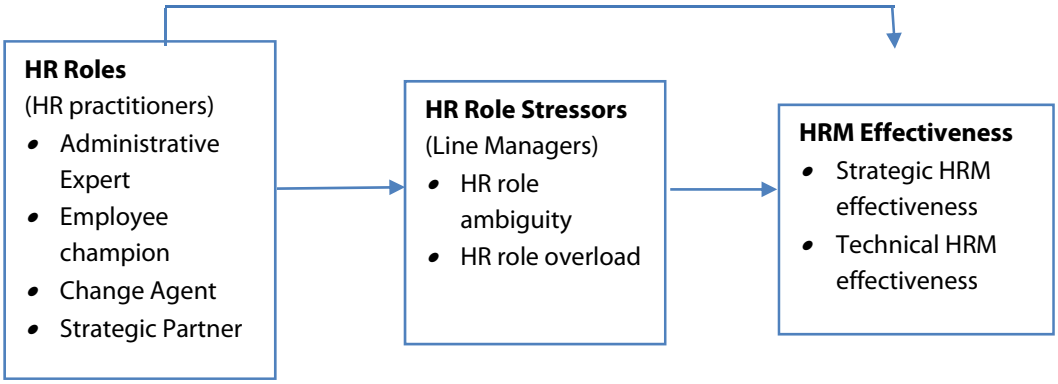


Table 1: Definitions of HR Roles

Role	Deliverable / Outcome	HR key roles / metaphor	Activity
Management of Strategic Human Resources	Executing strategy	Strategic Partner --Future/ Strategic focus (Related to people)	Aligning HR and business strategy: "Organisational diagnosis"
Management of Firm Infrastructure	Building an efficient infrastructure	Administrative Expert --Day to day/ Operational focus (Related to process)	Reengineering Organisation Processes: "Shared services"
Management of Employee Contribution	Increasing employee commitment and capability	Employee Champion -- Day to day/Operational focus (Related to process)	Listening and responding to Employees: "Providing resources to employees"
Management of Transformation and change	Creating a renewed organisation	Change Agent --Future/ Strategic focus (Related to people)	Managing transformation and change: "Ensuring capacity for change"

Source: Ulrich (1997)

their HR roles, to some extent, line managers perceive the devolved HR roles as a form of stress owing to their perception that these create extra duties that are beyond their work scope and competency. De Guzman et al. (2011) have pointed out that multinational/large companies in Malaysia have made steady progress in practicing strategic HR over the past two decades. This current study tests the relevancy of the steady progress through the perceptions of line managers on practicing strategic HR. In addition, this study examines the line managers' perceptions of the HR roles stressor, which affects HRM effectiveness.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

HR roles on HR role stressors

HR practitioners are the "role senders" and the front-line managers are the "role receivers". The relationship starts when HR practitioners begin to devolve their HR roles to line managers. In this light, line managers tend to face "HR role ambiguity" as they are not HR specialists (Gilbert et al., 2011b). Role ambiguity occurs because line managers do not have adequate skills and knowledge to practice HR roles. The lack of sufficient policy and procedures to clarify their HR responsibilities has created HR role ambiguity of line managers (Bos-Nehles 2010). Line managers also suffer from the lack of role clarity in the absence of well-aligned HR roles and responsibilities (Teague & Roche, 2012). Effective internal communication between role sender and role receiver can facilitate role clarity (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016). However, poor communication and a lack of supervision from HR practitioners on front-line managers often make the HR role of line managers ambiguous. As such, during the process of devolving HR roles to line managers, "HR role ambiguity" arises. HR roles (administrative expert, employee champion, strategic partner) are related to HR role ambiguity. Hence, this study has posited the following hypotheses:

H1a: The HR administrative expert role is negatively related to perceived HR role ambiguity.
H1b: The HR employee champion role is negatively related to perceived HR role ambiguity.
H1c: The HR change agent role is positively related to perceived HR role ambiguity.
H1d: The HR strategic partner role is negatively related to perceived HR role ambiguity.

HR practitioners and front-line managers are expected to perform multiple roles in strategic HRM (Ulrich, 1997) and having multiple roles affect several expected role behaviours. Consequently, when front-line managers are involved in multiple roles, they tend to experience role overload and line managers view their HR involvement as creating role overload for themselves (Watson, Maxwell & Farquharson, 2007). Role overload occurs because of the inconsistency between the quantity of work required and the time available to complete the assigned tasks (Evans, 2017). Most line managers find it difficult to successfully manage the time demands placed upon them by their various business and HR responsibilities. As a result, they experience role overload (Bos-Nehles, 2010). Thus, as Ussahawanitchakit (2008) explained, role overload can create performance uncertainty. Hence, it is important to examine the actual cause of "HR role overload" when line managers are assigned the task of "HR roles" (administrative expert, employee champion, strategic partner and change agent). For this purpose, this study has posited the following hypotheses:

H2a: The HR administrative expert role is negatively related to perceived HR role overload.
H2b: The HR employee champion role is negatively related to perceived HR role overload.
H2c: The HR change agent role is negatively related to perceived HR role overload.
H2d: The HR strategic partner role is negatively related to perceived HR role overload.

HR roles on HRM effectiveness

Yusliza, et al. (2010) studied the HRM effectiveness in HRM departments in large companies in Malaysia. The results indicated that the strategic partner role is positively related to HRM effectiveness, while, the other three roles (HR administrative expert, HR employee champion and HR change agent) are unrelated to HRM effectiveness (Yusliza et al., 2010). The HR role is regarded as key to the effectiveness of HRM (Boselie & Paauwe, 2005; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Mitsuhashi, Park, Wright & Chua, 2000; Wright, McMahan, McCormick & Sherman, 1998). In Malaysia, the practice of various HR roles is in a growing stage compared to that in developed Western and Asian countries (Choi et al., 2011; Mahnaz, Mohammad, & Hamid, 2012; Yusliza et al., 2010). Yusliza, et al. (2010) have asserted that empirical evidence on the relationship between the role of the HRM department and HRM effectiveness is very limited and not very well established in Malaysia. Hence, the need arises for this study to continue the research on the HR roles on the strategic and technical effectiveness of HRM. HR data are a form of measurement on how well HR practitioners in Malaysia are practicing

HR roles. In this regard, HR data also shows the practicalities of measuring strategic HRM outcomes. This study has posited the following hypotheses:

H3a: The HR administrative expert role is positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.
H3b: The HR employee champion role is positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.
H3c: The HR change agent role is positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.
H3d: The HR strategic partner role is positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.

H4a: The HR administrative expert role is positively related to technical HRM effectiveness.
H4b: The HR employee champion task role is positively related to technical HRM effectiveness.
H4c: The HR change agent role is positively related to technical HRM effectiveness.
H4d: The HR strategic partner role is positively related to technical HRM effectiveness.

HR Role stressors on HRM effectiveness

More recent research summarises how line managers are experiencing increased work responsibilities and tasks that are associated with the decline in the quality of their work (Townsend & Russell, 2013). Likewise, the literature confirms that role stress weakens performance (Showail, Parks & Smith, 2013; Kauppila, 2014). In an HRM study, Evans (2017) found that the HR role stress of line managers caused an inconsistency between the planned and the actual HRM implementation. HR role stressors are defined as HR role devolution without the accompaniment of clear policies and procedures regarding the use of HR practices and the division of responsibilities and authority. As a result, line managers become confused about their roles (Nehles, Van Riemsdijk, Kok & Looise, 2006). The analysis of the "HR role-stressors" variable is performed on line managers who perceive performing the HR roles as being stressful.

In the study of HR role-stressors, there are two areas to be investigated, namely, "HR role-ambiguity" and "HR role- overload". Gilbert et al. (2011b) commented on the consequences of the HR role stressor; however, they did not study the consequences of the effect of the well-being of front-line managers and their HRM effectiveness. Gilbert et al. (2011b) opined that it would be particularly useful to examine the perceptions of employees in this regard. Moreover, it is important to know whether the employees experience a negative effect of HR roles stressors when less effective HRM is implemented (Gilbert et al., 2011b).

Currently, limited studies exist on "HR role-stressors," particularly on HRM effectiveness, that available to the organisations especially in Malaysia. Without the clarity of the devolved HR roles, the HR role of line managers becomes ambiguous and they experience overload. Based on these conditions, successful strategic HRM effectiveness is relatively rare as role overload (Evans, 2017; Gilbert et al., 2011a; Hutchinson & Purcell, 2010) and role ambiguity (Hutchinson & Purcell, 2010; McConville, 2006; Renwick, 2003) create role stressors for line managers. In studying the role stressors in HRM research, the present study assumes that if poor performance is an outcome of role stress, then line managers' HR roles might lower their ability to effectively perform one of their key responsibilities – HRM. This logic suggests the following hypotheses:

H5a: The perceived HR role ambiguity of line managers is negatively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.
H5b: The perceived HR role overload of line managers is negatively related to strategic HRM effectiveness.

Baron, Jennings and Dobbin (1988) and Huselid, et al. (1997) explained that technical HRM activities have been increasingly regulated by means of stakeholders' expectations. This reflects that the high level of knowledge and expertise associated with HR activities is an occupational specialisation for those who carry out these activities. Hence, devolving HR roles to line managers is an occupational specialisation. When incompetent HR practitioners and unsupportive top management do not have structured programs and policies in place to prepare the line managers for technical HRM activities, then line managers would experience work uncertainty while practicing multiple roles, including devolved HR roles. This feeling of uncertainty about the devolved HR roles causes HR role ambiguity and HR role overload in line managers, and it influences technical HRM effectiveness. Thus, this study has developed the hypotheses as listed below:

H6a: The perceived HR role ambiguity of line managers is negatively related to technical HRM effectiveness.
H6b: The perceived HR role overload of line managers is positively related to technical HRM effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A primary survey questionnaire administered on 153 line managers in manufacturing companies in Malaysia, and the data were analysed through structural equation modelling (SEM) using SmartPLS. Wong's (2013) rule of thumb suggested a sample size

of 75 (6 arrows leading to an endogenous variable), and the present study has a sample size of 153 which is adequate. Chin's (2010) guideline is also applicable to the study as the sample size of this study was 153, which is more than his required sample size of 90.

The convenience sampling method was used for this study, which utilized a survey. Sekaran and Bougie (2010) explained that convenience sampling involves collecting information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide the preliminary information in a quick and inexpensive way. The sample was confined to the manufacturing companies in Malaysia.

A self-administered questionnaire utilizing both hard copies and an online survey were used for collecting responses. As this study was aimed to assess the relationship between HR roles, HR role stressors, and HRM effectiveness, the questionnaire developed comprised four sections including a profile of line managers. The questionnaires were distributed to line managers (supervisors, managers and department heads) of manufacturing companies in Malaysia. The respondents were line managers who were directly interact and responsible to their HR practitioners while practicing devolved HR roles.

An empirical survey-based research approach was adopted, comprising 56 items and utilizing a 7-point Likert scale (1= Strong Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Neutral, Slightly Agree = 5, Agree = 6, Strongly Agree = 7). A total of 1,084 sets of survey questionnaires were distributed through convenience sampling using both a hard copy and web-based survey. Of the 1,084 that were distributed, 153 of the returned survey questionnaires were valid and the response rate was 14.11%. Past reviewed studies have shown that response rates ranging from 6% to 28% are acceptable based on HRM studies (Becker & Huselid, 1998).

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The number of respondents involved in the study was 153, of which 103 (67.3%) were males and 50 (32.7%) were females. Most of the respondents, 128 (83.7%) were in the age group of 26 to 45 years, 92 (60.1%) of respondents were bachelor's degree holders followed by 29 (19.0%) who were master's degree holders and 28 (18.3%) who were diploma holders. Only 8 (5.2%) of the respondents served as department heads while the rest 145 (94.8%) were supervisors and managers. With respect to income, 111 (72.5%) of the respondents earned a monthly income between RM 4,000 (US$1,200) and above, 42 (27.5%) respondents earned between RM2,000 (US$600) and RM3,999 (US$1,199), and 27.5% earned between RM 2,000 (US$600) and RM3,999 (US$1,999). The data showed that only 15.7% of the respondents were ethnic Malays. In the sample, the average number of years of service of respondents in the manufacturing companies was 6.9.

Common Method Bias (CMB)

If the total variance explained by the first principal component (normalised linear combination) is more than 50%, then common method variance is present in the data. On the other hand, if the first derived component is less than 50% of the total variance, then there is no CMB. However, the total variance explained by extracted components must be more than 50% (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). In this study, eigen values that were more than 1 comprised 12 of the total of 51 factors. The cumulative of 12 factors constituted 77.086%. The first principal component explained 29.211% of the cumulative value of the 12 factors (77.086%) which was well below the specified value of 50%. The total variance explained by extracted components was 77.086%, which was well above the specified value of 50%. Hence, the data was free from common method bias.

Descriptive Statistics

The summary of the mean values and standard deviations of all the variables is presented in Table 2. Line managers tend to agree that HR practitioners do practice the "HR Administrative Expert" role (mean = 5.403), the HR "Employee Champion" role (mean = 5.188) and "HR change agent" role (mean = 5.140). Line managers tended to slightly agree that HR practitioners practice the "HR Strategic Partner" role (mean = 4.875). Line managers tended to slightly agree that "HR overload" does happen (mean = 4.462) and tended to slightly disagree with the presence "HR role ambiguity" (mean = 3.827). Furthermore, line managers tended to agree on strategic HRM effectiveness (mean = 5.133) and technical HRM effectiveness (mean = 5.444).

The measurement model of PLS-SEM for direct effect of the HR role stressors

The PLS model fitted very well for the data as the main loadings for all the questions items (indicators) were above 0.5. The average variance explained (AVE) was above 0.5 for the latent variable model in the research

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
"HR Roles"				
HR Administrative Expert (HRA)	2.40	7.00	5.403	0.782
HR Employee Champion (HRE)	2.40	7.00	5.188	0.951
HR Change Agent (HRC)	1.60	7.00	5.140	1.046
HR Strategic Partner Role (HRS)	1.20	7.00	4.875	1.102
Perceived "HR Role Stressors"				
HR role ambiguity (HRambi)	1.00	7.00	3.827	1.596
HR role overload (HRover)	1.75	7.00	4.462	1.454
HRM effectiveness				
Strategic HRM effectiveness (SHRM)	2.14	7.00	5.133	1.039
Technical HRM effectiveness (THRM)	1.82	7.00	5.404	0.923

framework. The minimum AVE was 0.533 and the maximum AVE was 0.876 (exceeding the recommended value of 0.5), which indicated an adequate convergent validity (Bagozzi, 2007). According to Hair et al. (2017), the minimum requirement for CR (composite reliability) is 0.7. Hence, all variables satisfied the recommended measurement values within the consistency of the minimum value (0.849) and the maximum value (0.966). According to Chin (2010), a R-squared value of 0.67 is considered "substantial", a R-square value of 0.35 is "moderate" and an R-square value of 0.19 is "weak". Therefore, strategic HRM effectiveness value of (0.343) and technical HRM effectiveness value of (0.319) moderately satisfied the requirement; however, the HR overload value of (0.057) and HR ambiguity value of (0.057) did not.

According to Table 3, the constructs' squared correlations were less than the square root of AVE of each indicator, which indicated acceptable discriminant validity in the constructs. Based on the results of the model measurement, although the loading of THRM12 was more than 0.5, it was deleted because the loading value affected the square root of AVE, which was lower compared to the correlation between the construct of technical HRM effectiveness (Table 3). After THRM 12 was deleted, values of the squared root of AVE ranging from 0.730 to 0.936 were obtained, and these values were higher compared to those of the correlation between the constructs. When convergent and discriminate validity tests were used to verify the measurement model, the overall results were adequate. HR roles (HRA, HRC, HRE, HRS) and HR role stressors (HRambi and HRover) contributed to a R-square = 0.343 on SHRM and a R square = 0.319 on THRM (Table 4). According to Wetzel, Odekerken-Schroder and Beatty, (2009), as a rule of thumb, a GOF value of above 0.36 indicates an excellent PLS model. Overall, the goodness of fit had a value of 0.365, which is significant for this present study.

Table 3: Direct Effect and Indirect Effect (Results of Measurement Model)

Model Construct	Indicator	Main Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	R squared
Strategic HR Roles					
HR Administrative Expert	HRA1	0.787	0.533	0.849	
	HRA2	0.825			
	HRA3	0.771			
	HRA4	0.665			
	HRA5	0.574			
HR Employee Champion	HRE1	0.8	0.609	0.886	
	HRE2	0.77			
	HRE3	0.824			
	HRE4	0.733			
	HRE5	0.771			
HR Strategic Partner Role	HRS1	0.768	0.676	0.912	
	HRS2	0.696			
	HRS3	0.904			
	HRS4	0.873			
	HRS5	0.853			

Table 3: *Continued*

HR Change Agent	HRC1	0.871	0.763	0.942	
	HRC2	0.885			
	HRC3	0.888			
	HRC4	0.836			
	HRC5	0.887			
Model Construct	**Indicator**	**Main Loading**	**AVE**	**Composite Reliability**	**R squared**
Perceived HR role stressors					
HR Overload	HRover1	0.912	0.816	0.947	0.057
	HRover2	0.93			
	HRover3	0.92			
	HRover4	0.849			
HR ambiguity	HRambi1	0.928	0.876	0.966	0.057
	HRambi2	0.951			
	HRambi3	0.94			
	HRambi4	0.924			
Model Construct	**Indicator**	**Main Loading**	**AVE**	**Composite Reliability**	**R squared**
HRM effectiveness					
Strategic HRM effectiveness	SHRM1	0.8	0.662	0.932	0.343
	SHRM2	0.85			
	SHRM3	0.867			
	SHRM4	0.806			
	SHRM5	0.865			
	SHRM6	0.804			
	SHRM7	0.691			
Technical HRM effectiveness	THRM1	0.638	0.548	0.93	0.319
	THRM2	0.704			
	THRM3	0.684			
	THRM4	0.652			
	THRM5	0.735			
	THRM6	0.793			
	THRM7	0.831			
	THRM8	0.813			
	THRM9	0.788			
	THRM10	0.721			
	THRM11	0.755			

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	HRA	HRambi	HRC	HRE	HRover	HRS	SHRM	THRM
HRA	**0.7300**							
HRambi	-0.1074	**0.9360**						
HRC	0.4518	-0.0270	**0.8740**					
HRE	0.5357	-0.0784	0.4152	**0.7800**				
HRover	0.1684	0.4841	0.1775	0.2139	**0.9030**			
HRS	0.4739	-0.1994	0.6190	0.4540	0.1433	**0.8220**		
SHRM	0.4348	-0.0028	0.4797	0.4309	0.2207	0.4681	**0.8140**	
THRM	0.4020	-0.0018	0.3450	0.4762	0.2967	0.4032	0.7193	**0.7400**

***Note*:** Diagonal (in bold) represent the square root of the AVE while others represent correlation
Abbreviation: HRA = Administrative Expert, HRC = Employee Champion, HRA = Change Agent, HRS = Strategic Partner, HRambi = HR role ambiguity, HRover = HR role overload, SHRM = Strategic Human Resource effectiveness, and THRM = Technical Human Resource effectiveness.

Significant findings of PLS direct effect and indirect effect of the HR role stressors

The hypotheses of this study were tested with partial least square path modelling using SmartPLS software. Five main hypotheses were tested. These included the direct relationship between "HR roles" (HRA, HRE, HRS, HRC) together with perceived "HR role stressors" (HRambi and HRover), which have 8 sub-hypotheses, the direct relationship between "HR roles" (HRA, HRE, HRS, HRC) together with HRM effectiveness (THRM, SHRM), which have 8 sub-hypotheses, and the direct relationship between perceived "HR role stressors" (HRambi and HRover) together with HRM effectiveness (THRM, SHRM), which have 4 sub-hypotheses. Table 5 shows the summary of the hypotheses together with outcomes. The indirect HR role stressors relationship comprise 8 sub-hypotheses between HR roles (HRA, HRE, HRS, HRC), perceived HR role stressors (HRambi and HRover) by line managers and HRM effectiveness (THRM, SHRM). Perceived "HR role stressors" by line managers was used to conceptualise and explain the influence of the HR roles on HRM effectiveness (Sekaran, & Bougie, 2010).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to create awareness among the stakeholders of manufacturing companies in Malaysia on the value of practicing HR roles and the importance of HR practitioners and line managers working together in formulating SHRM policies and practices that ultimately will help to increase HRM effectiveness. Role theory was employed as the main theory in this study because it supports the proposed theoretical framework. Ulrich's (1997) "HR role" topology provides a supporting theory for other variables in the framework. The unit of analysis in this research was the "line managers". Line managers – supervisors, managers and departmental heads – directly interact with and are responsible to their HR practitioners while practicing devolved HR roles. The study of the sample of 153 line managers was conducted in manufacturing companies located in Malaysia. In this regard, the constructed framework comprises three identified variables -- HR roles, HR role stressors, and HRM effectiveness.

Table 5: Significant Findings of PLS Direct Relationship among Model Variables

Hypothesis	Path	Beta value	Standard Error	t-value	Results
H1a	HRA -> HRAMBI	-0.055	0.108	-0.509	Not Supported
H1b	HRE -> HRAMBI	0.009	0.094	0.093	Not Supported
H1c	HRC -> HRAMBI	0.168	0.102	1.647**	Supported
H1d	HRS -> HRAMBI	-0.282	0.093	-3.022***	Supported
H2a	HRA -> HROVER	0.047	0.102	0.459	Not Supported
H2b	HRE -> HROVER	0.152	0.097	1.567*	Supported
H2c	HRC -> HROVER	0.099	0.122	0.807	Not Supported
H2d	HRS -> HROVER	-0.009	0.126	-0.069	Not Supported
H3a	HRA -> SHRM	0.154	0.094	1.636*	Supported
H3b	HRE -> SHRM	0.160	0.099	1.621*	Supported
H3c	HRC -> SHRM	0.218	0.132	1.651**	Supported
H3d	HRS -> SHRM	0.182	0.110	1.660**	Supported
H4a	HRA -> THRM	0.126	0.127	0.986	Not Supported
H4b	HRE -> THRM	0.280	0.109	2.564***	Supported
H4c	HRC -> THRM	0.041	0.110	0.374	Not Supported
H4d	HRS -> THRM	0.165	0.109	1.511*	Supported
H5a	HRAMBI -> SHRM	0.029	0.086	0.335	Not Supported
H5b	HROVER -> SHRM	0.082	0.093	0.885	Not Supported
H6a	HRAMBI -> THRM	-0.020	0.082	-0.245	Not Supported
H6b	HROVER -> THRM	0.188	0.086	2.183**	Supported

Notes: *** p< 0.01 (2.33) **p< 0.05 (1.645) * p< 0.10 (1.282). Abbreviation: HRA = Administrative Expert, HRC = Employee Champion, HRA = Change Agent, HRS = Strategic Partner, HRambi = HR role ambiguity, HRover = HR role overload, SHRM = Strategic Human Resource effectiveness, and THRM = Technical Human Resource effectiveness.

HR roles on HR role stressors

The influence of HR roles and HR role ambiguity

The hypotheses of HR change agent (H1c) and HR strategic partner (H1d) on HR role ambiguity were statistically supported. On the other hand, HR administrative expert (H1a) and HR employee champion (H1b) on HR role ambiguity were not statistically supported.

Due to limited research on the influence of HR roles on HR role ambiguity, the only literature that can be referred to is Gilbert et al (2011b). Gilbert et al (2011b) asserted that the number of devolved HR tasks was positively related to perceived HR role ambiguity. Moreover, HR change agent (H1c) was positively related to HR ambiguity while the hypothesis on HR change agent (H1c) was supported by Gilbert et al (2011b) who pointed out that HR tasks are positively related to perceived HR role ambiguity. Line managers are ambiguous about their duties when they are faced with management transformation and change because they do not have the skills to serve as HR change agents. Furthermore, line managers are not HR specialists and may not understand the processes and priorities of the changes needed.

The test results showed that the HR strategic partner role (H1d) was negatively related to HR ambiguity. The result (H1d) contradicted the research result of Gilbert et al (2011b), which indicated that HR tasks were positively related to perceived HR role ambiguity. Hypothesis (H1d) was significant and demonstrated that line managers did not face any ambiguity while being strategic partners with HR practitioners. Line managers do understand and have the skills to be strategic partners. Therefore, line managers can assist HR practitioners in aligning SHRM practices to an organisation's choice of strategy.

This study found that devolved the HR administrative expert role (H1a) and HR employee champion role (H1b) of line managers do not make any significant contributions towards the variance in HR ambiguity.

The influence of HR roles and HR role overload

The results showed that the hypothesis concerning the HR employee champion role (H2b) was statistically supported. However, the HR administrative expert role (H2a), the HR change agent role (H2c) and the HR strategic partner role (H2d) were not statistically significant with respect to HR role overload. Due to limited research on the influence of HR roles on HR role overload, the only literature that can be referred to is Gilbert et al (2011b). Gilbert et al (2011b) asserted that the number of devolved HR tasks was positively related to perceived HR role overload.

The HR employee champion role (H2b) was shown to be positively related to HR overload in this current study. This hypothesis (H2b) is supported by Gilbert et al. (2011b) who pointed that HR tasks were positively related with perceived HR role overload. Line managers are overloaded with daily problems, concerns and the needs of employees. To the average employee, line managers – not HR – represent the face of an organisation, as the direct handling of people has always been part of a line manager's duties.

Based on the hypotheses that the results did not support, it is evident that the set of HR roles hypotheses (H2a, H2c, H2d) did not make any significant contribution towards the variance in perceptions of HR overload. The non-significant findings have implied that, when line managers are experiencing overload, HR practitioners probably have stopped shifting big amounts of devolved HR roles (HR administrative expert, HR change agent and HR strategic partner) on to them and have lower expectations of line managers to avoid HR role overload. The rational might be that, if HR practitioners increase the HR workload on line managers while they are experiencing ambiguity, then more harm would be done when implementing HRM activities.

HR roles on HRM effectiveness

The influence of HR roles and strategic HRM effectiveness

In this study, line managers in Malaysia evaluated HR practices, specifically HR roles, on strategic HRM effectiveness. The following findings have been noted. First, the HR administrative expert role, the HR change agent role and the HR strategic partner role have been significantly and positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness. The supported hypothesis result of the strategic partner role on strategic HRM effectiveness was consistent with Yusliza, et al. (2010). Second, the hypothesis of HR employee champion role was not supported. Third, this study found that HR practitioners in Malaysia have improved significantly upon their roles as HR change agents when compared with Yusliza, et al. (2010).

Interestingly, when line managers are involved in devolved in HR roles, there is improvement in strategic HRM effectiveness while HR practitioners are practicing HR roles. From the data analysis, the HR administrative expert role (H3a), the HR employee champion role (H3b), the HR change agent role (H3c) and the HR strategic partner role (H3d) were significant and positively related to strategic HRM effectiveness. This

indicates that, when HR practitioners and line managers are working together in HRM policies and activities, then an increased improvement exists in their HR roles with respect to strategic HRM effectiveness. It also indicates that HR practitioners cannot perform HR roles alone but require the assistance of line managers to increase strategic HRM effectiveness. The finding of the current study implies that line managers are of the opinion that there has been a degree of improvement in strategic planning of HR roles (HR administrative expert, HR employee champion, HR change agent and HR strategic partner) with respect to strategic HRM effectiveness in manufacturing companies in Malaysia.

The results of H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d were not consistent with Yusliza, et al. (2010). This is because the dependent variable on HRM effectiveness in this current study consists of strategic HRM effectiveness and technical HRM effectiveness while Yusliza et al. (2010) only included HRM effectiveness as a dependent variable.

The influence of HR roles and technical HRM effectiveness

Line managers in Malaysia have also evaluated HR roles with respect to technical HRM effectiveness. This research found that the HR employee champion role was significantly and positively related to technical HRM effectiveness while the HR change agent, strategic partner and administrative expert roles were significantly supported.

Interestingly, the results showed that when line managers are involved in devolved in HR roles, there was improvement in technical HRM effectiveness while HR practitioners were practicing HR roles. This research study has found that the HR employee champion (H4b) and HR strategic partner (H4d) roles were significantly and positively related to technical HRM effectiveness; the HR administrative expert (H4a) and HR change agent (H4c) roles on HR practitioners have made no significant contribution towards the variance in technical HRM effectiveness.

The results indicated that HR practitioners did not offer any significant technical contributions in implementing HR administrative expert (H4a) and HR change agent (H4c) roles, but they offered technical contributions to HR employee champion (H4b) and strategic partner (H3d) roles. Obviously, HR practitioners are practicing employee-oriented HR and the role of strategic partners with line managers; however, they require improvement in the implementation of technical HR administrative expert (H4a) and technical HR change agent (H4c) roles. Moreover, this current study agrees with the perspective that the implementation of HR roles in Malaysia remains in a growth stage compared to that of developed Western and Asian countries (Choi et al., 2011; Mahnaz et al., 2012; Yusliza et al., 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the results of H4a, H4b, H4c, and H4d were not consistent with respect to Yusliza et al. (2010). This is because that the research dependent variable of HRM effectiveness in this current comprises strategic HRM effectiveness and technical HRM effectiveness but Yusliza et al. (2010) research only included HRM effectiveness as a dependent variable.

HR role stressors on HRM effectiveness

The influence of HR roles stressors and strategic HRM effectiveness

In assessing the relationship between HR role ambiguity and HR role overload on strategic HRM effectiveness, HR role ambiguity (H5a) and HR role overload (H5b) were found to have no significant relationship with strategic HRM effectiveness. This finding implies that, when line managers experience stress they make no effort or pay no attention to strategic HRM effectiveness.

Although studies of role stressors have had a long tradition in the organisation behaviour literature (Gilboa, et al, 2008), few studies have focused on the topic of stressors of the HR role on line managers (Gilbert et al., 2011b). Due to the limited research of HR role stressors on HRM effectiveness, little is known about whether the HR role stressors that line managers face affect strategic HRM effectiveness.

Based on the role theory of Katz and Kahn (1978), line managers hold multiple roles – core duties and devolved HR roles. Gilbert et al (2011a) explained that these multiple roles have resulted in several expected role behaviours. When the expected roles are ambiguous and create an overload, line managers experience HR role stressors. Logically, line managers who have experienced HR role stressors perform poorly in their devolved HR roles. Obviously, the result of this research shows that HR role ambiguity (H5a) and HR role overload (H5b) have no significance relationship with strategic HRM effectiveness because the bad performance of line managers is a predictor of HRM ineffectiveness.

The influence of HR roles stressors and technical HRM effectiveness

HR role overload (H6b) is a good predictor of technical HRM effectiveness as the hypothesis (H6b) was

significant and positively related to technical HRM effectiveness. HR ambiguity (H6a) was found to have no significant relationship with technical HRM effectiveness. Due to the limited research of HR role stressors on HRM effectiveness, little is known about whether HR role stressors faced by line managers affect technical HRM effectiveness.

Gilbert et al. (2011b) and Nehles et al. (2006) asserted that line managers experience stress because of devolved HR roles are not accompanied by clear policies and procedures regarding the use of HR practices, the division of responsibilities and authority. Furthermore, devolved HR roles add to what is already seen as an extensive workload, and line managers lack the time to perform all HR duties well (Maxwell & Watson, 2006), thus, resulting in HR overload. Katz and Kahn (1978) said that an extensive workload (HR overload) is a predictor of negative attitudes and behaviours of an individual that ultimately result in a bad performance.

The result of the hypothesis (H6b) is consistent with the concept of Maxwell and Watson (2006) and the theory of role by Katz and Kahn (1978). The hypothesis (H6b) test result shows that HR overload had a significant and positive influence on technical HRM effectiveness. Conway and Monks (2010) have asserted that HR overload is a problem. Present research has signified that overload that line manager experience because of the devolved HR role has adversely impacted the technical effectiveness of HRM implementation. Being a strategic partner to HR managers, line managers face numerous challenges. HR managers tend to overly burden line managers with shared HR workload on HR technical subject matters such as the selection of high ability employees. Such matters are the purview of HR managers who have the unique skills needed. Hence, they impact positively on technical HRM effectiveness.

On the other hand, test results have shown that the hypothesis regarding HR ambiguity (H6a) on technical HRM effectiveness was not supported. Based on the concept of Maxwell and Watson (2006) and the role theory of Katz and Kahn (1978), ambiguity about jobs leads to job ineffectiveness.

In summary, this study's results show that 10 hypotheses were accepted (H1c, H1d, H2b, H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d, H4b, H4d, and H6b) while 10 hypotheses were rejected (H1a, H1b, H2a, H2c, H2d, H4a, H4c, H5a, H5b, and H6a. This is acceptable considering the newness of the research in Malaysian context.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show that HR roles significantly and positively influence strategic HRM effectiveness. This implies that line managers are committed to taking on their HRM roles, and they are committed to being strategic partners of the HR department. However, line managers are often ineffective in implementing technical HRM because they are rarely HR specialists (Nehles et al., 2006). Another implication is that line managers are not technically competent in implementing the duties of an HR administrative expert, an HR change agent or a strategic partner. Test result has indicated that line managers see any ambiguity while being a strategic partner; however, line managers are ambiguous with respect to the duties of an HR change agent. This is because line managers are not competent enough to take on the roles of change agent in comparison to HR practitioners. The results suggested that if HR managers provided less non-technical HR roles, then line managers are comfortable and are able to effectively execute the duties.

One serious implication is that any technical expertise that line managers might possess is lost when an HR overload occurs. Line managers were the opinion that some HR roles were too technical, and they did not possess the expertise. Thus, to optimise positive effects on employee commitment, it may be useful to develop and train line managers in HR technical skills.

Warner, Xie and Zhu (2013) asserted that devolved HR roles have become part of the duties of line managers globalised companies. HRM ineffectiveness has a negative impact on an organization's performance and low organizational performance negatively influences a company's return of investment. Thus, companies must address the needs of line managers as these duties become devolved.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Several limitations associated with this study are worth noting. First, the same study should be further expanded to other countries as the current study has been conducted in the context of Malaysia. Second, this study only focuses on manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Manufacturing industries can be categorised into large or small companies and it a challenging task to generalise the result obtained because HRM practices will be different according to the size of the company. Third, this study only includes the views of line managers, hence it may only provide

perceptions and views on HR roles stressors, the strategic and technical HRM effectiveness of HR practitioners. Future researchers should include the views of HR practitioners on these variables. Finally, using convenient sampling, the survey is distributed among line managers in manufacturing companies. Because the sampling frame was not known, and the sample was not chosen at random, inherent bias exists in the convenience sampling, which means that the sample may not really represent the population being studied. This undermines the ability to generalise this study's finding to the population studied.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, HR practitioners have been devolving HR management duties to line managers. As both line managers and HR managers are not holding HR management duties, to measure the HRM performance, asking exactly which HR duties should be carried out by line managers and which duties should be carried out by trained HR practitioners is reasonable. No one division of responsibilities would apply to all organisations, but each organisation can implement a clear and specific job specification of line managers that includes HR management duties. As a facilitator, top management should define the effective goals of HR practitioners and line managers. Line managers and HR practitioners should remain mindful of the concept of "SMART" (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely) to develop and achieve effective goals. Due to the trends affected by globalisation, top management should motivate line managers to provide the HR efforts of a firm with a more strategic emphasis and also to better equip line managers so that they can integrate a firm's human resource efforts with the rest of the business.

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