

Exploring the Impact of High Performance Work System (HPWS) in Multinational Organization: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract:

The primary objective of this research was to investigate and explore the impact of high-performance work systems (HPWS) on employee performance from the managers perspective. We achieved this through a comprehensive dialogue module involving semi-structured interviews with 13 individual managers from three multinational organizations in Bangladesh. The key purpose here is to understand how HPWS implemented in the organization which leads to enhanced employee performance in the context of Bangladesh. The research further extends certain elements of the institutional theory while drawing references from the Resource Based View (RBV) and Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO), to derive the forerunners and impact of the beliefs held by managers in regards to the 'why' in terms of the existence of HPWS and how these are embraced within the activities of their organizations. The findings of this study indicate that HPWS tend to have a positive impact on the overall performance of employees in Bangladesh, as it does in Western settings. Extensive sector-based implications have also been identified and investigated, but further research in the field of HPWS with a larger sample size could lead to deeper and more intricate results that would inadvertently lead to a greater understanding of contemporary and effective HR practices in the context.

Keywords: Multinational corporations (MNC's), Strategic human resource management (SHRM), High performance work system (HPWS), Resource Based View (RBV), Ability-motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory, Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

There have been extensive deliberations on high-performance work systems (HPWS), regardless of their short history. Considering that there has been no consensus regarding defining this concept, it is possible to consider HPWS, in a general sense, as an organic amalgamation of an array of cooperation and coordination among human resources management (HRM) practices, with a view to improving organizational and individual employee performance (Siddique, 2016). The HPWS tends to defy the conventional model of hierarchy within management by utilizing flat organizational structures to facilitate employees with secure environments, organizational productivity

and identification, extensive training, and competitive compensation. This, in turn, results not only in organizational and individual development over a long period of time, but also in a sustainable competitive edge (Pak and Kim, 2018).

Currently, research pertaining to HPWS comprises individual- and organizational-level studies. At the individual level, empirical studies have suggested that there is considerable scope for enhancing individual performance with HPWS. This includes service quality, information sharing, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (Asgarsani et al., 2013). At the same time, previous research has investigated and

ascertained the causal association between corporate performance and HPWS at the organizational level (Shin and Konrad, 2017; Ashiru et al., 2022). According to past research on strategic human resource management (SHRM), with the introduction of HPWS in their workplaces, organizations are in a position to increase their efficiency and acquire a competitive edge in their respective fields (Jyoti and Rani, 2017). HPWS largely adopts a content based approach which indicates that there is a link between HPWS and improvements in objective, as well as, subjective performance (Panigrahi et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that HPWS consists of practices within HR that have the propensity to enhance knowledge, motivation and skills of employees (Sanders et al., 2014). Empirical research carried out in the past has signified that the implementation of HPWS is directly responsible for positive results such as innovation, job performance, and creativity (Costantini et al., 2017; Panigrahi et al., 2019), increased organizational citizenship behavior (Singh et al., 2020), increased commitment to the organization and job (Korff et al., 2017), increased employee retention, and greater organizational performance. However, several researchers have challenged the validity of these findings. For example, it has been reported by Ayalew Melsse (2017), who posited that positive impact presented by HPWS on financial or operational performance of an organization becomes non-existent in situations where there is a need for controlling concurrent performances. To clarify such ambiguity within the findings, researchers have been in favor of investigating the process viewpoint of HPWS.

Furthermore, HR practices have also been affected by the challenges emerging from globalization. This has received positive responses from academics who have

proposed the need to adopt diverse approaches to HRM (Agarwal and Mohammed, 2017). A large number of researchers in the HRM domain have mostly engaged with HRM process design within multinational organizations, as compared to institutional environments, governmental regulations, societal norms, and HRM practices that are prevalent across various nations. Issues such as acculturation also figure highly in their list of priorities. However, it has been observed that concepts and theoretical models that are distinct are largely founded in European and American contexts. This raises the question of how such HRM approaches would be pertinent to the experiences and applications of HRM within developing economies, whose cultures can differ significantly from their Western counterparts. Moreover, HPWS has been considered a development within HR practices that are prominent in the West, and therefore, it tends to overlook economies that are still under development. As a result, a large amount of research on HPWS has occurred in western regions such as Europe and the United States (Tsironis, 2021). While HPWS have been tagged by researchers as practices adopted within the West, there is no clarity as to how such practices can be implemented and successful at the same time within diverse settings such as Bangladesh.

However, HPWS have emerged as a critical theme for research within the domain of strategic human resource management (SHRM), as they enable organizations to realize a greater level of performance (Shin and Konrad, 2017). Recent studies have empirically and theoretically documented these arguments (Heffernan and Dundon, 2016). It has also been observed that HPWS has specifically been instrumental in nurturing ambidexterity within organizations (Úbeda-García et al., 2018), augmenting involvement within the job (Huang et al., 2016), extensively contributing towards

innovation within organizations, and enhancing service performance (Flinchbaugh et al., 2016), among others. There is no doubt that research on HPWS has gained enormous popularity in recent times. However, it has also been facing criticism from researchers owing to the absence of any progress from a theoretical viewpoint, methodological shortcomings, imbalance between qualitative and quantitative research, and lack of equilibrium between research conducted in the western and non-western regions of the world (White and Bryson, 2019). In addition, limited number of qualitative research has been conducted related to managers perception about HPWS studies in Bangladesh. Based on these arguments, the aim of this current research is to bridge the knowledge gap by examining the relationship between HPWS and employee performance.

Keeping the aforementioned factors in mind, this study conducted a semi-structured interview with 13 managers to examine the impact of HPWS on employee performance. The key purpose here is to understand how HPWS perceived by the managers and implemented within the context of Bangladesh which leads to enhanced employee performance. The study extends certain elements of institutional theory while supports resource-based view (RBV) and ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) theory in terms of HPWS existence and how they are embraced within the studied organizations. Using RBV theory reflects that human resources are a source of competitive advantage. Whereas, AMO theory proposes how managers can motivate employee performance by influencing employees ability (A) to perform, motivate (M) them towards work by encouraging them and creating opportunities (O) to perform their best in their respective role (Fu et al; 2015).

Therefore, the following research question and objectives were formulated:

Research Question: How do managers in Bangladesh perceive and experience HPWS?

- To inspect the correlation between HPWS and employee performance;
- Comprehensively scrutinizes how HPWS can influence employee behavior, which consequently affects employee performance.

2.0 Human Resource Management in Bangladesh

In terms of economic growth, Bangladesh has been successful in realizing substantial economic growth, and the overall contribution of the industrial sector to its national gross domestic product (GDP) was around 28.5 per cent (Division, 2021). It has been predicted that Bangladesh will emerge as the 23rd largest economy across the world with regard to PPT by 2050. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh has been included in the list of N-11 countries by Goldman Sachs (Etzold et al., 2015). To acquire the status of a middle-income nation, while keeping in mind the restricted natural resources in Bangladesh and wealth of human resources, efficacy and efficiency within human resource management (HRM) practices could prove to be a critical factor that drove economic development in Bangladesh (Wickramasinghe and Mahmood, 2017).

Nonetheless, HRM practices that are presently known to exist in Bangladesh are simply not up to the mark required for the country to achieve its economic development objectives. A large number of organizations that currently exist within Bangladesh are owned by families, and the control of such organizations rests only on members of the family. Activities pertaining to HRM are perceived as the whims and fancies of the person who owns the organization. However, in recent times, organizations that are heavily export-oriented and labor-intensive have

been under tremendous pressure from North American and EU nations to sustain standards in terms of labor rights and to enhance the working conditions within their factories (Liu et al., 2019). Such pressure on Bangladeshi organizations from players beyond their nations is now forcing organizations to let go of current HRM practices and adopt new practices while modifying their corporate culture. Researchers have indicated that an enhancement in working conditions and improved wage structures has the potential to enhance the profitability and productivity of organizations in Bangladesh (Siddiqi and Tangem, 2018).

However, several researchers have been indicated that Bangladeshi organizations are more inclined towards western style human resource practices influenced by MNCs operating in the country. In addition, it is evident that multinationals have been functioning in Bangladesh for a long time now and their performance is higher than local organizations (Wahid and Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018). Therefore, Bangladeshi organizations are required to develop HRM practices that are efficient and systematic, which will enable them to gain a global competitive edge and, at the same time, be better equipped to tackle the consistently changing requirements of the economy. Nonetheless, organizations that are largely owned or controlled by families are yet to understand or be convinced of the advantages that can be gained from effective and systematic HRM practices such as HPWS.

3.0 Literature Review

The HPWS has been extensively accepted and recognized as a vital instrument for an organization to achieve greater performance levels, ensure long-term survival, and improve overall effectiveness in the current competitive business environment (Zhu et al., 2018). This implies that

organizations that make optimal investments in HPWS are frequently found to surpass their performance levels at a higher level than organizations that do not. Thus, the notion of HPWS has received significant attention from SHRM researchers and scholars who have extensively investigated the underlying mechanisms based on which organizations tend to modify the inputs from HPWS into valuable outputs for the organization (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2021).

As a concept, HPWS has been frequently perceived as an array of practices within HR that have been structured in such a way that would improve the skills of the employees, their productivity, and commitment in a manner such that employees emerge as a vital source, all of which provides a competitive edge to the organization (Zafar et al., 2020). A conceptualization of this kind, with regard to HPWS, signifies the impact that HPWS can have on HR-related outcomes such as abilities, skills, behaviors, and attitudes of employees, as well as on functional outcomes such as organizational productivity. Based on this logic, scholars have opined that, based on the assumption that employees tend to be strategic resources for an organization, HPWS acts as a tool that is instrumental in converting organizational members into strategic resources for an organization, and thus lends support to upholding the competitive edge of an organization by improving the contributions made by employees to improve organizational performance (Pak and Kim, 2018). To summarize, HPWS are known to play an intrinsic role in producing, building, and executing the abilities and skills of employees while influencing their behaviors, motivation, and attitudes, with a view to augmenting their performance, which enables them to compete effectively with others in the market.

According to (Zhang et al., 2018), although there is widespread acceptance that HPWS is intrinsically associated with an array of organizational as well as individual outcomes, a certain level of skepticism is known to exist with regard to the manner in which HPWS actually impacts organizational and individual performance (Zhang et al., 2018). Based on this logic, research pertaining to HPWS has become very time appropriate and has turned out to be a significant stream of research. Nonetheless, there are certain issues and gaps that include the lack of detailed information about the influence of HPWS on employee performance (Ashiru et al., 2022). Moreover, the mechanisms that can be instrumental in establishing this link have not yet been completely emphasized (MRF. Aqeela, 2018). Other researchers have reiterated similar views with regard to the issue of an absence of clarity, poor theoretical underpinnings without any detailed explanation of the relationship between performance and HPWS, and the issue of mixed outcomes (Li et al., 2019).

Certain researchers have been particularly interested in the specific aspects of such findings. For instance, Prashanthakumar (2018) concluded that while HPWS is known to deliver the intended results, it offers less clarity on how such an association unfolds. The need for further research has hinted at addressing the gaps in research. The theoretical foundations pertaining to the relationship between HRM and organization were reviewed by Riaz and Mahmood (2017), and the focus was specifically on the scope of HPWS acting as a distinct resource in terms of support and augmenting effectiveness while executing the strategy for the organization and achieving organizational goals. Much attention has been devoted to challenges pertaining to methodology within empirical research conducted in the past that has

adopted this system's viewpoint and the learning that can be derived through research at various levels of analysis. Research related to HR practices and SHRM has revealed diverse theoretical perspectives that lend credence to underlying mechanisms. Researchers have deemed that the factors that significantly mediate this relationship do not offer any clarity and are not comprehensible. This is irrespective of the fact that empirical research has investigated the link between HPWS and organizational performance. An explanation as to how and why there exists a link between organizational performance and HPWS depends significantly on theories of strategic human resource management (SHRM). Therefore, it would be beneficial to build theoretical assumptions regarding the process based on which employee performance is influenced by HPWS.

Several theoretical frameworks have been deployed to elucidate why and how HPWS bring a sustainable competitive edge to an organization. Nonetheless, RBV has been utilized as a theory that underpins a large number of HRM studies to indicate its positive influence on the overall performance of an organization. According to the RBV theory, for some resources to qualify as a source that provides a sustainable competitive edge, it is imperative that the resource adds value to the organization, is imperfectly imitable, rare, and does not have any appropriate substitutes. In particular, it has been argued from the resource-based view that there is a need to consider four attributes as sources that offer a competitive edge to organizations. These attributes are imperfectly imitable, valuable, non-substitutable, and rare.

One of the theories that is exceedingly popular and could be instrumental in presenting an understanding of the association between behavioral outcomes and HPWS within an organization is the AMO theory. The AMO model

explains that managers can improve employee performance by positively influencing the ability (A) of an employee to perform, motivate (M) them to perform, and offer opportunities (O) for them to function within their workplace (Kellner et al., 2019). In addition, as per the AMO model, it has been suggested that the HPWS is founded on three significant elements to utilize the discretionary effort of employees (Kellner et al., 2019). Thus, it has been suggested through the AMO theory that organizational performance is more like a function of the ability, motivation, and opportunity of an employee to participate, and that employees tend to perform better in their job in situations where they obtain the requisite knowledge and skills to execute that job (abilities), are highly enthusiastic, receive appropriate rewards upon execution of the job at hand (motivation), and receive support to freely express their opinions from their environment at work (opportunity to participate).

In response, this particular research attempts to bridge these knowledge gaps. At the same time, it is important to mention that all of the gaps have been derived through studies conducted in the past, using quantitative methods, and there is hardly any research that has been conducted by adopting a qualitative research approach. Thus, it can be argued that by adopting a qualitative approach for conducting this research, we can derive findings that might offer valuable inputs while establishing the correlation between HPWS and employee performance from the perspective of managers who are responsible to implement the HR practices in the organization.

The vast literature related to research on international human resource management (IHRM) is an outcome of globalization that can be observed within international markets by leveraging information and communication

technologies (ICT), where multinational organizations assume significance (Harzing and Ashly Pinnington, 2019). IHRM is associated with HRM practices and policies within multinational organizations. Its objectives are to ensure that multinational organizations draw, develop, and involve highly skilled individuals essential to achieving business goals (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). The growth in competition among global and domestic organizations owing to massive market expansion within Eastern Europe, India, South Asia, and China runs in tandem with the larger requirement of developing a clear understanding of Human Resources Management practices across diverse regions of the world (Harzing and Pinnington, 2019). However, challenges from globalization and their impact on HRM practices have received a positive response from academics, who have proposed that diverse HRM approaches need to be taken in accordance (Edwards et al., 2005). A large number of international human resource management (IHRM) researchers focus on designing HRM procedures within multinational organizations with regard to the institutional environment, norms of society, governmental regulations, and HRM practices within diverse regions (Metcalf and Rees, 2005). Aspects pertaining to acculturation and culture are of great value. Nonetheless, it can be perceived that theoretical notions and paradigms which are exceptional are grounded on European and American contexts. Thus, it raises concerns as to how approaches to HRM that are Anglo-Saxon in nature could be pertinent as per the experience and practice of HRM within developing economies such as South Asian nations, i.e; Bangladesh (Rowley and Warner, 2007). Furthermore, there is a need to investigate individual HR practices that form the crux of HPWS. It is worthwhile to mention that according to researches there are 61 HR practices are listed dated between

1992 to 2011 (Posthuma et al.; 2013). Nevertheless, certain HR practices are more common in HPWS dimension and implemented in most organisations. However, present research considers five main HR practices used by the studied organizations to find out the relationship between HPWS and employee performance. These are recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and communication and information sharing HR practices.

It has been stated by (Mohammad, 2020), recruitment pertains to varied activities that are initiated to bring new applicants to an organization. At the same time, selection consists of sorting through the vast number of new applicants and arriving at a decision on hiring them. Simply stated, recruitment and selection refer to attracting potential candidates and choosing the right one with the right skill-sets, qualifications, and experience for a role. Among all HR functions, recruitment and selection are functions that are most important HR practices in the HPWS dimension (Kapur, 2020).

Training and development is another significant HR practice in the HPWS dimension. According to studies in the HRM domain, the training and development of employees form the crux of all functions within an organization. Training and development of employees impacts organizational development in a positive manner, thus facilitating growth of the organization and impacting employees' performance (Antonacopoulou, 2000). Appropriate investments for the training of right employees tend to augment their skills and strength and also facilitate the development of their performance (Sultana et al., 2012; Abdullah et al., 2013). Another HRM practice that is significant relates to performance appraisal. As per the extant

literature (Khan, 2010), a major link exists between organizational performance and performance appraisals (Khan et al., 2017). Khan et al. (2017) argued that HR practices that are complementary, such as training programs or compensation, tend to develop performance appraisals furthermore so as to influence overall productivity. In situations where organizations are successful in the performance management of their employees, it eventually results in the propagation of a vital element of the organization, thus projecting the way in which management of employees occurs.

Similarly, research indicates that a system of rewards needs to be appropriate for the workforce to offer value to them. The compensation or reward system should also be at par with the contribution and capabilities of the workforce. Studies by (Khan, 2010; Cross Ogohi, 2017), that compensation offered by an organization tends to have an inter-linkage with organizational as well as individual performance. At the same time, HR practices revolving around communication and sharing of information focus on offering employees with appropriate intelligence regarding key aspects such as operations, strategies, finance, or organizational performance of an organisation (Demirbag et al., 2014). Such practices result in assured communication between subordinates and superiors. As per empirical literature (Ahmad and Huvila, 2019), it has been agreed that communication and information practices are vital to nurture the opinion of an employee.

Moreover, studies have also established that HPWS are directly linked to employees' attitudes towards job commitment and job satisfaction (Wu and Chaturvedi, 2009; Bashir et al., 2018). In addition, as per the findings from a study conducted by Macky and Boxall (2007), it was found that HPWS positively impacted employers as well as employees, and a

positive correlation existed between variables of attitude such as job satisfaction, trust, and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction is one of the foremost employee attitudes, according to researchers and practitioners. Burton (2007) stated that the generation of joy at work and enthusiasm among employees leads to definite promotion and recognition, leading to a sense of job fulfillment. At the same time, Farsi et al. (2017) stated that employees tend to derive inherent encouragement within their employment as an outcome of contentment and job satisfaction. Similarly, findings from a study by Agarwala (2003), revealed a positive link amongst HPWS and organisational commitment. Furthermore, as per empirical evidence, it has been asserted that the practice of HPWS within the organization leads to the development of an environment that is supportive for employees by offering them ample scope for training, unbiased performance feedback, and lucrative compensation with the potential for career advancement (Dorta-Afonso et al., 2021). In addition, it has also been shown that HPWS adoption on the part of management would result in the creation of trust among employees to a level where managerial competence would work in favor of their interests (Macky and Boxall, 2007).

An organization tends to be bound to some aspects by its institutional environment, and these would comprise mandatory legal rules, institutional rules, legitimacy, and many more that take external factors into account. Many researchers such as (Powell and Dimaggio, 2012; Redding, 2005) who have posited that for survival, organizations usually tend to mold themselves to practices that are appropriate to ensure legitimacy while finding acceptance within society. Confronting similar environmental pressures results in the organization adopting a structure of internal industry, which is the same as others and the same organizational

practices. It has been evidenced through previous researches that while confronting environments that are economically as well as politically same could result in the organization to adopt same techniques in order to be same as others for ensuring legitimacy within the institutional environment. Institutional components that are deep-rooted within the organization could prove to have a robust influence on specific HRM practices and policies that motivate effectiveness, social well-being, and competitiveness with regard to performance measures within the workforce.

Practices within HRM are largely reliant on legal necessities and have to adhere to diverse regulations along with union strength and attitudes towards management (Budhwar et al., 2016). Organizations are confronted with various institutional influences; therefore, it is clear that diverse organizations adopt and adhere to varying HRM practices (Chowdhury and Mahmood, 2012). Furthermore, the specific qualifications and skills of employees and approaches to management are attributed to institutional environments. Nonetheless, culture is yet another fundamental ground that makes up institutional environments, which are entrenched deep within beliefs, social norms, and values (Hofstede, 1984). Combinations such as this are inclusive of culture and various institutional viewpoints, which define essential practices in HR within a specific nation where the institutional environment and culture are substantially different from those known to exist in the West (Chowdhury and Mahmood, 2012; North, 1990).

Empirical studies that have been executed in the past have indicated that adopting HPWS technique is associated with organizational competitiveness within developed nations such as the United States (Thite et al., 2012; Joseph Tawk, 2021) and also in nations that are still in the phase of

development. This is particularly true for nations in East and Southeast Asia (Bae and Lawler, 2000). At this point, it would be apt to mention that most of the studies on HPWS were carried out across Western nations; therefore, an interesting aspect that has emerged is whether such findings derived through studies conducted in the West can be applied within nations that are still in their phase of development (Thite et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2011). Irrespective of such debates, researchers and scholars within the domain of HPWS have been concerned with its effectiveness across diverse institutional settings, considering its Western origins (Bello-Pintado, 2015; Muduli, 2012). Researchers have also argued that the HPWS is appropriate for adoption and practice within nations that are still developing and emerging economies (Thite et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2007).

Instead of thinking that the institutional setting of a nation neatly falls into the cognitive, regulative, and normative domains, this research proposes that within Bangladesh, a large number of organizations build and legalize their platforms on the basis of normative influence. Institutional theory's normative dimension, like the culture of the nation, tends to impact not just the way in which people are known to behave, but also how they are attuned to communication, authority, and risk. Cultural variations are largely captured in the literature pertaining to international business (Demirbag et al., 2010; Rabl et al., 2014). A vast number of empirical studies have reported that cultural variations might moderate the association between organizational performance and HR practices (Triguero-Sánchez et al., 2013; Evans and Davis, 2005). According to institutional theory, national culture is deemed a significant aspect of decisions pertaining to market entry.

National culture is known to play an influential role in international business

management approaches and practices (Khan and Law, 2018). It has been increasingly evidenced through studies (Đorđević, 2016) that systems of national and individual cultures have a tremendous impact on corporate cultural systems in several ways. For instance, national cultures tend to influence leadership styles, decision-making among managers, and, most importantly, human resource management practices. Similarly, policies within an organization, such as policies pertaining to human resources, are impacted by diverse national institutions such as vocational and educational training, industrial regulations and standards, and labor laws (Khan and Law, 2018). In essence, it has been evidenced that culture is instrumental in organizing values into mental programmes, and the way in which people behave within organizations is actually a portrayal of such programmes. Considering that national culture is deemed a system of behaviors, attitudes, and values that are deeply formed within the members of a society, these are mostly instrumental in determining the traits of other national systems, such as economic, legal, and political. This indicates that culture within nations is a significant factor that needs to be considered, especially when an organization is keen to enter a foreign market (Wijewantha, 2019). Subsequently, the culture of a nation also assumes utmost significance in structuring international human resource management (IHRM) content. The significance of culture to IHRM has been clearly evident from the fact that, in this concept, there exists a special segment that refers to comparative human resource management, which investigates the variations within the content of HRM among nations, fundamentally caused by the traits of culture within a nation (Vinnakota, 2017). Among all the factors that have been recognized to influence the diffusion of HR practices, national culture is a key

influencing factor within the domain of IHRM (Singh et al., 2019).

It has been reiterated by (Venaik and Brewer, 2016) reiterate that defining culture is rather intricate and challenging. Culture is inclusive of components out of which there were explicit as well as implicit components. It is possible to elucidate a large number of such components using terms such as values, fundamental assumptions, norms, and behaviors. Cultural values could reveal the extent to which a society views behaviors such as independent thinking and risk-taking, which are desirable, and it has been recommended that in case HR practices that are handed down by the parent organization are not in tandem with behaviors within the host culture, it certainly remains to be seen whether such practices would be accepted by employees within the foreign subsidiary (Peretz et al., 2018). Cultures that value and offer rewards to such behaviors tend to encourage the scope for the development and introduction of radical innovation. On the other hand, cultures that strengthen group interests, conformity, and control over the future have less scope for adopting or practicing innovative or risk-taking behavior (Smith and Bond, 2019). Accordingly, for instance, practices in terms of performance management that have been adopted by a parent organization might require to be at par with those cultural values or else they might appear to be unrealistic. In addition, if a parent organization is based on a nation that accords high significance and encourages individualism, while the subsidiary organization operates within a collectivist culture, there is a high probability that practices where individual rewards are provided might not be well received (Üskül and Oishi, 2018).

4.0 Methods

4.1 Procedure

The present study adopted a qualitative research method in which an

inductive approach was utilized to validate the findings of this research. As per (Liu, 2016), an inductive approach focuses on finding a pattern based on observations derived by a researcher and developing explanations to derive a conclusive theory. Thematic analysis is usually carried out within qualitative research and is particularly beneficial when it comes to developing themes and their classification based on data gathered (Majumdar, 2019). In this study, the data were segregated into themes, adopting a thematic approach to analyze the qualitative data. The questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews was developed based on a detailed literature review, through which the key factors for the questionnaire were derived. The questions for the semi-structured interview were as follows: Q1: Describe the perception of HPWS in your organization from your own perspective; Q2: Describe HPWS or HR practices and their impact(s) on employee performance; and Q3: Describe how HPWS can sway employee attitudes.

4.2 Data Collection and Interviews

Data for this qualitative research was gathered from three major informants (HR Managers) from three organizations (Multinational telecom organizations in Bangladesh) which were considered for this research. The main reason for identifying key respondents from the chosen MNCs was to identify individuals who had due knowledge about prevalent HPWS practices and those who would convert the general HPWS patterns instead of policies within their organizations. Research conducted in the past within high-performing organizations has used HR managers as key informants (Oladapo and Onyeaso, 2013). Choosing fewer HR managers as key informants allowed the researcher to maintain regular contact with them throughout the research period. This was realized when respondents were asked questions pertaining to the

current research while visiting their organizations, wherein the visits were arranged through informal relationships. Thirteen respondents were interviewed to facilitate the qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews.

On the basis of information obtained through the HR department of the organizations in question, the HR managers and personnel were contacted to execute the face-to-face interviews with voluntary consent, at a place and time previously fixed and agreed upon. Once the consent form was signed and upon obtaining permission for recording, the key informants were interviewed. At the time of the interview, the researcher presented an opportunity to review related documents pertaining to HR, such as annual reports, job satisfaction surveys, and performance appraisal forms. The findings derived through HR documentation and transcripts from the recorded interviews helped the researcher make deeper field observations that added more direction to

generating the qualitative findings and further analysis.

4.3 Key informant profile

The researcher interviewed senior HR managers from Human resources division (HRD) of three-selected telecom organizations. (see Table 1.1). The purpose for selecting HR managers as key informant is three-facets. First of all, it can be assumed that the HR managers can have an in-depth speculation of the workplace and its culture. Secondly, the HR managers are directly involved in how HR practices are implemented in the organizations. The HR managers in the studied organizations who spoke on behalf of their respective organization and their employees. But the insights of their remarks are not limited to their own judgement and cannot be seen as being biased as the researcher has made sure to develop her interview questions in such a way that the interviewees could not evade her queries and had to reveal the true scenario.

Table 1.1: Interview participant for Qualitative data collection

Position in the Organization	Human Resource Department (Senior HR manager)
Role in the Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsible for organisations HRM strategy, designing and implementing in accordance with the parent company guidelines. ▪ The HR managers are responsible for all the necessary support required for proper implementation of HR practices, policies and operational procedures. ▪ Make sure of proper execution of HR practices working with the frontline HR managers to ensure the satisfaction of the employee beneficiaries.
Number of Interview participants	Total number of Thirteen (13) participants from three-studied organization.

The result of the interviews reflects that HR managers perceive that the effective use of HPWS practices leads to enhanced employee performance in the studied organisation. The interview questions were divided under three major key themes. For example, high performance work systems (HPWS), employee performance, and employee attitudes.

4.3 Data Analysis

Keeping in mind the reason for this research and the type of research questions that were framed, the data derived from respondents during the interview were analyzed using content analysis. This technique is immensely popular for analyzing qualitative data and deriving meaning from them (Elo et al., 2014). The information gathered through semi-structured interviews was summarized for the analysis. Data analysis was conducted in three consecutive phases: data reduction, display, and interpretation (Akinyonde and Khan, 2018).

5.0 Results

This section presents the results that have been derived through the qualitative interviews. Interview transcripts were provided in response to the questions posed to achieve the research objectives. The focus was on two key objectives, as highlighted in the previous section, and the responses were in accordance with these objectives.

5.1 High performance work system (HPWS)

The primary objective of the first question was to examine managerial perceptions of HPWS in the three selected organizations. HR managers emphasized the significance of HRM strategy and its extensive influence within the organization in their responses. This line of response and discussion is consistent with the findings of the literature review.

Positive answers from all of the interviewed HR managers established the importance of HPWS within the organization.

Organizational performance is hugely influenced by HPWS. Factors which impact the adoption of HPWS include, firstly, the pressure from customers and secondly to be different from and better than other players in the market.

[Respondent-5]

An organization cannot sustain itself in the long run without the application of HPWS. Human Resources of and organization continues to be at the center of organizational strength which allows that organization to achieve greater employee performance.

[Respondent-7]

HPWS create important factors for employee motivation, which in turn allows them to perform better. Intellectual capital forms most, if not all, of the stock on which the success of our organization depends. Therefore, our vision statement reflects our ambition to not only be the topmost player in the telecom market, but also become the employer of choice. [Respondent-9]

Managers from the organizations were extremely confident in claiming that their HR strategies were aligned with the overarching organizational goal. One respondent opined that:

HPWS forms a vital segment of an organization's backbone and is one major factor behind improving employee performance.

[Respondent-4]

The managers, in their interview sessions, focus on the fact that market competition among the three major mobile operators in the country is extremely high, and hence, organizations in this field need both short-term and long-term strategies to

develop their employees and, second, to sustain themselves in the market. For example, some of the managers signified in their interviews:

Due to the increasing competition among mobile operators in the country, we need to develop and apply strategic plans to hold our position and prosper in the market.

[Respondent-1]

Our objective is to remain a high functioning organization in the market and the impartial involvement of our HR division in making strategic decisions is intricate in achieving that goal. **[Respondent-3]**

After twelve years in a private organization in the area, I've decided to come here. During my time in that work environment, information including HR policy and decisions was considered by senior management to be irrelevant to the employees at the departmental level.

[Respondent-10]

HR rules are kept private in local businesses, and only HR managers are aware of them. We and our staff are never inconvenienced by HR processes. **[Respondent-11]**

HPWS is one of our top motivations at work, and it's already in place. Working in an international environment has its perks. As you can see, we have a free for all policy in the organization, and our work space is set up in a such a manner that facilitates frequent contact among coworkers. **[Respondent-12]**

We work for Europe's largest multinational telecom company, and we introduced HPWS to encourage employees to do their best work.

[Respondent-13]

5.2 Employee Performance

The second interview question is directed towards further explanation of HPWS as a bundle of HR practices to examine its influences on employee performance. Manager's perception and opinions on each individual HR practices are discussed in detail in following paragraphs.

Our employees are the sole drivers of the future of our organization and hence we always greet (recruit and select) candidates who set themselves apart with their talent, intellect and morality. CVs and academic qualifications are important to a particular extent but we also acknowledge and reward the passion that they hold for the job. **[Respondent-1]**

To guarantee employee quality and performance, our organization operates vigorous and extremely selective recruitment procedures throughout the year. **[Respondent-4]**

The telecom sector has become quite contentious in present times as smart young graduates are choosing these organizations over others. However, without appropriate selection and recruitment procedures, we would fail to hold on to them. Hence, our selection procedures and rigorous and

extremely careful in choosing the perfect candidates for our organization. [Respondent-2]

A growth in market performance, higher profits, and lower employee turnover have been experienced in the past 3 years due to the tremendous efforts from our team. One factor behind this is our vigorous recruitment policy. Respondent-8]

We focus on our employees' 'can do' attitude and we believe this to be our greatest strength. Hence, we often ignore some insignificant shortcoming of a candidate when we observe that they possess the intention and ability to push themselves beyond their boundaries and aim to tackle new obstacles. The reasoning behind this is that anybody with the right attitude and mindset can be trained with appropriate skills after recruitment. [Respondent-5]

During our interview and selection procedures, we often notice that some candidates lack the highest skill level but possess the right attitude, and such people usually tend to push themselves harder to achieve particular goals and to not give up easily. Proper training and the right guidance can help these candidates improve because they already have the right attitude to take on

new challenges. These people add more value to an organization than those who have higher skill levels but lack the ability to take themselves out of the box.

[Respondent-6]

During the interview and selection procedures, we frequently note that candidates may not have the best talents, but they have the correct attitude..... Such people are more likely to work harder to complete tasks and are less likely to quit.

[Respondent-10]

To some extent, CVs and academic degrees are significant, but we also value their enthusiasm for the job.

[Respondent-12]

We prioritize candidates that are fluent in English and have strong IT abilities, as well as good academic achievements, while shortlisting candidates. [Respondent-13]

5.3 Employee Attitudes

This question aims to explore how HPWS can influence employee attitudes and behaviors. Further categorization of more areas of focus, including job satisfaction, affective commitment, and trust in management, from the responses aims to address more specifics of employee attitudes, which can, in turn, positively impact employee performance.

The compensation is based on performance appraisals and consequently employees feel more motivated to perform better in their jobs.

[Respondent-2]

Our office environment provides a huge motivational factor behind working here.

The treatment of employees as a big family allows greater job satisfaction in employees.

[Respondent-3]

Annual job satisfaction surveys in our organization ensure that employees are happy in their jobs and find areas to improve on working conditions.

[Respondent-5]

We take pride in the fact that we are the only telecom company in the country that utilizes a tiered performance scheme - The better you perform the more you get.

[Respondent-8]

Employees in our organization can work on their own needs by selecting their own training modules.

[Respondent-4]

We take pride in the fact that we are the only telecom business in the country that has performance-based incentive program.

[Respondent-10]

Employees are free to choose their own training curriculum to match their own needs.

[Respondent-11]

Our workplace environment is one of the most motivating and satisfying aspects of working here. Working here is like being part

of a big family.

[Respondent-12]

6.0 Discussion

As per the findings derived from this study, HPWS is a recurrent theme that is of concern to the three telecom companies in Bangladesh, and it is a major concern as far as the formal structures of the organizations are concerned. The findings from the interview also revealed that the HR department is vital for the organization, and HPWS has a direct impact on the performance of employees while stimulating a positive attitude among them towards their organizations. A key matter here was that HPWS formed the crux of the organizations in question and had the potential to drive change among employees and improve organizational performance overall. Based on the interview findings, the recruitment and selection processes within the organizations were founded on the qualifications of the candidate. Several processes were in place to screen the employees to ensure that they had the required skill sets and qualifications for optimal performance. Previous studies conducted in the past have indicated that a robust recruitment process is associated with increased job satisfaction, as employees who fit better are likely to excel in their respective positions (Messersmith et al., 2011; Waal, 2012). In addition, the education system in Bangladesh is largely based on the Western curriculum. This is revealed by the findings that most employees possess university-level education. The increase in the number of Western MNCs in Bangladesh has enabled HR professionals to embrace superior HR practices, thus proving that HPWS are highly effective within the country.

From a conventional point of view, two key theories are known to impact the link between HR practices and organizational performance at a greater level than what has been presented through empirical evidence. The two theories that are being referred to

would comprise the Resource Based View (RBV) and the Behavioural Perspective (Hitt et al., 2016). RBV theory posits that HR has the potential to develop a competitive edge for organizations as an integral element that tends to add value. As per this view, justification has been presented in terms of investing in HPWS, which would be greatly beneficial to employees within a specific organization by having a tight rein over the performance of the organization on the whole (Journal et al., 2020). On the other hand, the behavioral perspective directs the spotlight on motivation and encouragement, which is produced based on HR practices that engage human resources in terms of output that is highly productive. From this perspective, employee ability motivation (AMO) can be viewed as a linking mechanism that tends to produce greater performance. This research is grounded in these two theories to establish a link between HPWS and employee performance.

Given that organizations within the telecom sector are deemed knowledge-based sectors, they make huge investments in employee training through online training programs. Such strategies for human resource development form the crux of organizational strategy, which is positively linked to employee performance. Moreover, research conducted in the past has indicated that an environment that is supportive wherein training and development opportunities are extended results in an increase in the level of employees (El-ghalayini, 2016; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). The findings from the interviews also indicated that information and communication practices within the three telecom organizations were transparent, and employees and HR managers arrived at decisions in a collective manner. Surveys are executed by HR managers in tandem with one-to-one meetings while organizing social events to develop a robust bond among

employees. At present, it is common to find employees who are passionate about their work rather than focusing on monetary emoluments. Thus, they tend to seek out organizations that challenge their mental faculties while offering a comfortable work environment. A balance between the two leads to job satisfaction, and employees continue to pursue their professional objectives.

Further, the findings also revealed that top-level managers from MNCs functioned as per the conventional style of management, irrespective of the fact that they adhered to Western HPWS practices within their organizations. Keeping the culture of Bangladesh in mind, it can be asserted that employees in Bangladesh are poised for change, particularly in the context of MNCs. It is also not dependent on whether senior managers believe in the scope of leveraging advantages through the HPWS. Bangladesh, as such, is no longer considered the least developed country; rather, it is one of the fastest growing economy in the world (Wahid and Prince, 2020).

8.0 Implications and Limitations

The practical implications of this research are that the HPWS provides a robust competitive edge to the three telecom organizations in Bangladesh. Thus, with a view to enhancing the performance of business, the chosen telecom organizations need to extensively adopt HPWS practices while concentrating on practices that offer more advantages such as compensation is linked with performance appraisal, selective recruitment, need based training and free flow of communication process to reduce the barrier between managers and employees. In addition, since managers are responsible for implementing the HR practices in the studied organizations, therefore organization must train the HR managers to develop proper HR policies and execution plan to utilize employees full potentiality. As a

consequence, employees will be motivated to use their knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) to perform at their best. The key limitation of this study is it considers small sample size. In the future, other research methods could be adopted with increased sample sizes across diverse industries to facilitate the generalizability of the findings.

7.0 Concluding remarks

This study confirms that HPWS have a positive impact on the performance of employees in a non-Western setting. Similarities in the findings were also observed in a western setting. Organizations should realize that human capital is the valuable asset that can attain sustainable competitive advantage therefore it is organizations obligations to train their human resources in such a way that is rare, valuable and hard to copy for the market competitors. This study has robustly contributed to the existing literature pertaining to HPWS from the perspective of one of the fastest growing nations, such as Bangladesh, which is in a phase of rapid development.

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