

The Impact of High Commitment Human Resource Management on Job Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Job Autonomy

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Abstract: To investigate the impact of high commitment human resource management on job satisfaction, a random questionnaire survey is conducted on 194 teachers in higher education institutions nationwide. SPSS22.0 is used in methods including descriptive statistical analysis, one-way analysis of variance, back testing, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and stepwise regression analysis. The following results are obtained: (1) High commitment human resource management and job autonomy were significantly and positively correlated; (2) High commitment human resource management is significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction; (3) Job autonomy is significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction; (4) High commitment human resource management and job autonomy are significantly different in terms of education. Job satisfaction is significantly different in terms of employee status and years of working. High commitment human resource management, job autonomy, and job satisfaction are significantly different in terms of school location (provincial capital, non-provincial capital); (5) Job autonomy plays a partially mediating role in the relationship between high commitment human resource management and job satisfaction. In response to the results, it is suggested that Chinese higher education institutions should implement high commitment human resource management model to reasonably expand employees' job autonomy and improve their job satisfaction according to the actual situation.

1. Introduction

China is a country with a large population and abundant human resources. However, with the passage of time and the development of the times, the labor force in China has gradually changed from the previous surplus to a state of shortage. Under the global community of destiny, everyone learns from each other and the management concepts are constantly innovating. How to retain and introduce more excellent talents has become the core work of the human resource

department of enterprises.

China's higher education institutions have long adopted an administrative mode of supervision in human resources management, with great emphasis on the effective use and scientific management of staff, such as appraisal, personnel adjustment, file management, recruitment, training and promotion, which have become the daily affairs of personnel management in major universities. This personnel management mode has also many disadvantages, such as too fast growth rate of non-teaching staff, the lack of reasonable job mobility of teaching staff, and the difficulty to assess the work of teaching staff and non-teaching staff, which easily lead to egalitarianism and internal conflicts among teaching staff, etc. (Liu Mingyu, Fanjia and Shen Feng, 2015).^[8] The reform is imminent while China's enterprises are making the transformation. Are our higher education institutions also trying, and what is the degree of practice? How about employee job autonomy and job satisfaction? What is the relationship between high commitment human resource management, job autonomy, and job satisfaction? This is the question that this paper is trying to address.

2. Literature Review

High commitment human resource management refers to a management model that enhances employees' trust in the organization's commitment and makes them agree with its management philosophy, which ultimately contributes to a win-win situation (Li Yanping and Long Ding, 2014). Walton, through his earliest research on human resource management practices, argues that human resource management models cover two major categories from the perspective of human nature, namely commitment type and control type (Walton, 1985). Arthur points out that the main types of human resource management are commitment type and control type. The former is more focused on making staff act within certain rules, while complying with the enterprise's systems, completing their tasks on time, and giving bonuses to outstanding employees so as to minimize costs. The latter focuses more on talent management and emotional commitment between employees and the organization, also generating better economic performance, operational performance and reduced employee turnover (Arthur, 1994).^[1] Maslow emphasizes that in the three major developmental stages of an individual, the following needs emerge including physiological needs, security needs, social needs, and the need for respect and self-transcendence. Traditional enterprises will be characterized by low technological content and high labor intensity in the development stage. Thus, it could be found that the traditional human resource management model, which aims to motivate employees to produce, belongs to a major need in the survival stage of the organization. Hence it will recruit more talented people through higher welfare benefits. As the economic development of enterprises becomes increasingly diversified, human resources become the key to win in the competition, which puts more demanding requirements on human resource management (Duan Tiange, Gui Lanying and Li Mingze, 2016).^[4] Obviously, commitment-based human resource management is clearly the darling of this era. Next, more scholars have integrated human resource management approaches in order to create a more practical management model, and numerous discussions on the topic of "idealized" human resource management models have emerged. The high commitment human resource management model, which starts from the employee perspective of the organization, is the one that is generally favored (Liu Shanshi, Liu Huijian, and Weng Saizhu, 2005).^[9] This model is based on the premise of maximizing employees' emotional commitment to the company, creating a strong dependency of all employees on the company and generating more economic benefits for them (Lincoln, 1998).

Job autonomy refers to giving employees the right to choose their jobs and determine how they work, giving them some discretion so that they will feel that the organization trusts them, enhancing their job autonomy and creating performance for the organization. Certainly, it belongs

to one of the key features among the work (Hackman and Oldham, 1976).^[5] It has been argued that a person who has a voice in his or her work will have higher job satisfaction than the average employees (Parasuraman and Alutto, 1984). It has been found that if a person has more control over the job, his or her job satisfaction will also increase. In particular, the increase in job satisfaction is most pronounced when employees move from “no job autonomy at all” to “little job autonomy” (Nguyen, 2003). Domestic scholars have also made significant achievements in the study of job autonomy. The study of Zhang Ling and Zhang Zhengtang found that organizational commitment, job autonomy and job satisfaction can have a significant impact on the performance of knowledge workers.^[10] The study concluded that knowledge workers tend to be very autonomy-oriented, and prefer self-direction in their work as well as a relaxed organizational atmosphere. In this study, therefore, a group of highly knowledgeable higher education teachers are investigated and the relationship between job satisfaction and job autonomy is identified as the main point of analysis. There is a positive relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. For example, when job autonomy is greater, job satisfaction is also higher (Cai Guowei, and Liu Jianxiong, 2013).^[12]

Job satisfaction refers to an emotionally charged perception that employees have about the condition of their jobs (Chang Liang, 2013). Scholars often use the job satisfaction subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire when measuring job satisfaction. At the same time, a few scholars have pointed out that the job satisfaction scale is very complex and it is better to use a combination of these two measures (Feng Jin and Qin Qiwen, 2009).^[3] The study of job satisfaction is often combined with motivation and equity theories. Equity theory suggests that job satisfaction is the conclusion that employees reach after comparing their own gains with those of their colleagues. Some scholars, after analyzing job satisfaction, point out that factors such as job stress, self-esteem, job autonomy and personal values of employees affect their job satisfaction (Locke and Henne, 1986). Specifically, the specific factors influencing satisfaction include situational factors within the organization (e.g., job tasks and roles, physical and human environment at work), institutional factors (e.g., whether rules and regulations are reasonable), outcome factors (e.g., level of compensation, fairness, promotion opportunities and career development, and personal value enhancement), individual employee factors (e.g. demographic characteristics, personality characteristics, gender, etc.), personal values (e.g., demographic characteristics, personality traits, gender, etc.), non-work-related factors (e.g., employees' family, life, etc.), the match between employees' personality and work, and the match between personal characteristics and organizational culture (Huang Gui, 2005).^[6]

In summary, existing studies conclude that high commitment human resource management is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction, job autonomy is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction, and high commitment human resource management is significantly and positively related to job autonomy. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, motivation and equity theory, and literature review, this paper proposes the following hypotheses on the relationship between high commitment human resource management, worker autonomy, and job satisfaction.

H1: High commitment to human resource management is significantly and positively associated with job autonomy

H2: High commitment to human resource management is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction

H3: Job autonomy is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction

H4: There are significant differences in personal characteristic factors such as gender and education in terms of high commitment to human resource management, job autonomy, and job satisfaction

H5: Job autonomy mediates the relationship between high commitment human resource management and job satisfaction

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Sample

The survey is conducted among teachers from higher education institutions nationwide, of which more than 60% are “female teachers”, while the proportion of male teachers is 38.66%. In terms of age, the majority of teachers are “31-40 years old” (51.55%), while the proportion of teachers aged 26-30 is 31.96%. In terms of title level, there are relatively more teachers with “junior” title which takes up 53.61%, and 38.66% of teachers with intermediate title. In terms of education, more than 60% of teachers have a “bachelor’s degree”. In addition, the proportion of teachers with master’s degree is 34.02%. In terms of years of service, the proportion of teachers with “one to five years” is relatively high at 42.78%, and that of teachers with six to ten years of service is 31.96%. More than 70% of teachers are “general employees”. The proportion of “public institutions” is 56.19%. The proportion of the sample from private institutions is 40.21%. In terms of school distribution, the majority of the sample are from “non-capital cities” with 60.31%. Another 39.69% of the sample are from provincial capitals. 51.55% are “suburban” schools and 48.45% are urban samples. The randomness of the sample and the wide coverage of the survey facilitate the drawing of reliable analytical conclusions.

3.2 Research Tools

The High Commitment Human Resource Management Questionnaire, based on Xiao, Z., & Björkman, I. (2006), is designed with a total of 14 questions including “The school promotes senior staff from within rather than recruiting from outside”. The Job Autonomy Questionnaire is based on Liu, C, Spector, P. E, & Shi, L. (2007), which includes three questions “I have the right to decide how to do and complete my job, the job offers me considerable opportunities to do my job independently and freely, and the job gives me the opportunity to use my own creativity or judgment in completing my tasks”. For Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire, the questionnaire is designed based on Liu, C, Spector, P. E., & Shi, L. (2007) with a total of three questions “In general, I do not like my job. In general, I am satisfied with my job. In general, I like working here”. The mean of the questions included in the three questionnaires is calculated and a 5-point scale is used to measure the degree of conformity with reality, with 1-5 representing “not conform at all”, “not conform”, “unclear”, “conform” and “very conform”.

3.3 Research Steps

The pre-test questionnaire “High Commitment Human Resource Management, Job Autonomy, and Job Satisfaction Questionnaire” is tested for reliability, validity and item purification, and the official questionnaire is administered. The relationship between high commitment human resource management, job autonomy and job satisfaction is studied empirically through descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis, one-way analysis of variance, back testing, regression analysis, stepwise regression analysis and other data analysis processes for the 194 teachers’ survey data after passing the reliability, validity and normality tests.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Status of High Commitment Human Resource Management, Job Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

Descriptive statistical analysis of 194 teachers' questionnaires reveals that college commitment human resource management, job autonomy and job satisfaction are at moderate levels. Through one-way analysis of variance and back testing, it is further found that there are significant differences in high commitment human resource management in terms of education, years of working, school location (provincial capital, non-provincial capital), job autonomy in terms of education, school location (provincial capital, non-provincial capital), and job satisfaction in terms of years of working, employee status, and school location (provincial capital, non-provincial capital). As is shown in Table 1, the hypothesis H4 passed partial validation.

Table 1: Correlation of High Commitment Human Resource Management, Job Autonomy, and Job Satisfaction

High Commitment Human Resources Management		Job Autonomy	Job Satisfaction
High Commitment Human Resources Management	1		
Job Autonomy	.565**	1	
Job Satisfaction	.302**	.225**	1
Source: Compiled by this study			

4.2 Analysis of the Relationship between High Commitment Human Resource Management and Job Autonomy

Selecting high commitment human resource management as the independent variable and job autonomy as the dependent variable, and subjecting job autonomy to linear regression analysis, high commitment human resource management produces a regression coefficient value of 0.834 ($t=9.495$, $p=0.000<0.01$) which implies that job autonomy is positively influenced by high commitment human resource management and hypothesis H1 is tested. Through stepwise regression analysis, regression coefficient value of 0.116 ($t=2.381$, $p=0.018<0.05$) for appraisal emphasis on team instead of individual implies that appraisal emphasis on team instead of individual will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job autonomy. The regression coefficient value of 0.109 ($t=2.091$, $p=0.038<0.05$) for good school compensation (including salary and various benefits) implies that good school compensation (including salary and various benefits) will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job autonomy. The regression coefficient value of 0.111 ($t=2.130$, $p=0.034<0.05$) for teachers being as equal as possible in terms of income, status, and culture implies that teachers being as equal as possible in terms of income, status, and culture will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job autonomy. The value of the regression coefficient of open communication from the top of the school and sharing various information with the staff is 0.296 ($t=5.248$, $p=0.000<0.01$), which means that open communication from the top of the school and sharing various information with the staff will have a significantly positive relationship on job autonomy.^[7]

4.3 Analysis of the Relationship between High Commitment Human Resource Management and Job Satisfaction

A linear regression analysis using high commitment human resource management as the independent variable and job satisfaction as the dependent variable shows a regression coefficient value of 1.204 ($t=24.217$, $p=0.000<0.01$) for high commitment human resource management, implying that high commitment human resource management will have a significant positive relationship on job satisfaction and hypothesis H2 passes the test. Through stepwise regression analysis, it is found that the value of regression coefficient for good school compensation (including salary and various benefits) 0.069 ($t=2.888$, $p=0.004<0.01$), implying that good school compensation (including salary and various benefits), will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job satisfaction. The regression coefficient value of 0.106 ($t=3.754$, $p=0.000<0.01$) for the involvement of faculty in decision making through systems such as faculty suggestion implies that the involvement of faculty in decision making through systems such as faculty suggestion will have a significant positive influence relationship on job satisfaction. The regression coefficient value of open communication from the top of the school and sharing various information with the staff is 0.117 ($t=4.134$, $p=0.000<0.01$), which means that open communication from the top of the school and sharing various information with the staff will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job satisfaction.^[11]

4.4 Analysis of the Relationship between Job Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

A linear regression analysis with job autonomy as the independent variable and job satisfaction as the dependent variable shows that the value of regression coefficient for job autonomy is 0.360 ($t=12.031$, $p=0.000<0.01$), implying that job autonomy will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job satisfaction and hypothesis H3 passes the test. Through stepwise regression analysis, all of job autonomy will have a significantly positive influence relationship on job satisfaction. Firstly, job autonomy fully reflects the trust relationship between the organization and the individual, which becomes the key to achieve the organization's goals and the success of the employee. It is known that the lack of trust leads to uncooperative employees or higher supervision costs. Secondly, job autonomy is a kind of freedom and authority. This discretion gives the organization's employees the authority to handle and organize matters according to the actual situation. This can further enhance staff satisfaction with their jobs (Ling Zhang et al., 2009).

4.5 The Mediating Role of Job Autonomy

As high commitment human resource management as the independent variable, job satisfaction degree as the dependent variable and job autonomy as the mediator, the mediating effect analysis involves a total of 3 models which are as follows: $\text{job autonomy} = 0.502 + 0.875 * \text{high commitment human resource management}$, $\text{job satisfaction} = 2.019 + 0.383 * \text{high commitment human resource management}$, and $\text{job autonomy} = -0.945 + 0.601 * \text{high Commitment human resource management} + 0.717 * \text{Job Satisfaction}$. Hence job autonomy plays a partially mediating role between the effect of High Commitment human resource management on job satisfaction degree and hypothesis H5 passes partial validation.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the high commitment human resource management model in our higher education institutions is moderate, and job autonomy and job satisfaction are also moderate. The

relationship between the three is also significantly and positively correlated, and job autonomy plays a partial mediating role, and the factors of education, employee status, years of experience, and school location (provincial capital, non-provincial capital) are significantly different among the three variables. It is worth noting that the high commitment model of human resource management has only been introduced to China by the West in the last two decades. The political, economic, cultural and other general environment and the small internal environment faced by the organisation in China are relatively complex, so the organisation must consider the actual situation of the company when adopting the high commitment human resource management model. Second, the organisation must pay great attention to employees' job satisfaction, and improve employees' job satisfaction by reasonably expanding their job autonomy and other ways, so as to retain talents and reduce the turnover rate. Finally, research on high-commitment human resource management should be conducted in the context of Chinese national conditions, including the development of scales, the research level from individual level to organisational level or expanding to team level, introducing more Chinese elements, discussing the mediating or moderating factors that affect the effect of implementing high-commitment human resource management model, such as Chinese neutral culture, team culture, organisational support, organisational identity factors, etc.

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