

A MEDIATING EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE OF THAILAND'S STATE OWNED ENTERPRISES LISTED COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

This study critically reviewed relevant literature in search of Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) with the aim of exploring SHRD components and the influence of SHRD to employee performance. It also focuses on the investigation of the role of employee commitment as a mediator from employees of Thailand's State Owned Enterprises listed companies. The findings were presented by descriptive and inferential statistics and the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was examined by structural equation modelling using AMOS.

The results of the study from 232 respondents demonstrated that SHRD had a positive effect on employee performance. Given the influential variables of SHRD components, strategic capability development was the most influential in the developmental context, while supervisor involvement was the most influential in the organizational context. Significantly, employee commitment was found to play partially a mediating role in the relationship between SHRD and employee performance of the State Owned Enterprises. Suggestions from this study pointed out that investing in SHRD of the organization contributing to effective employee performance should be carried out in parallel with imbuing employees with high commitment to the organization.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Development, SHRD, Employee Performance, Employee Commitment

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD) has become more widely accepted as an approach built on the concept of the currently available Human Resource Development (HRD). It takes a comprehensive and long-term view of how human resource policies and practices may help businesses achieve their goals (Armstrong, 2014). This new perspective is considered part of the strategic human resource management to create a competitive advantage. SHRD has also become more accepted as a human resource management tool to support the organization's business strategy. However, in implementing SHRD into practice in organizations, there have been no generally accepted elements of this concept. Therefore, they may not be able to definitively determine which methods will lead to employees' outstanding performance. It is necessary that organizations must pay attention to the components of SHRD and other factors relating to such development tools. Intrinsic factors in employees are inevitably involved in the success of employee potential development. One of the key factors is the commitment of each employee in the organization, which has been extensively studied regarding its relevance to success in objectives and goals set by organizations.

As improving employee performance through SHRD is a matter of interest in the search for a mediating role of employee commitment, therefore, research questions of the study are how SHRD affects employee performance and how the employee commitment plays a role as a mediator in the influence of SHRD and employee performance of Thailand's State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) listed companies. Then, the main purposes of the study are to identify the effect of SHRD on employee performance and examine the mediating role of employee commitment on SHRD contexts towards employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Human Resource Development (SHRD)

SHRD aims to create coherence and encompass operational guidelines for HRD. In most cases, HRD process focuses on creating an environment that encourages personnel in the organization to learn and develop. HRD activities might include traditional training programs used to guide HRD. It focuses on how to develop the knowledge and skills of employees and organizations as well as how to integrate between work and employees' learning (Swanson & Holton, 2009). However, SHRD should focus more on the development of intellectual capital in the organization. Such a focus can be considered the creation of knowledge for the organization under systematic knowledge management. In addition, SHRD is also considered a means of planning for personnel to access development on their own, also known as, self-administered learning under the support and guidance of appropriate knowledge development from the organization. Even though SHRD is in line with business directions, its policy should also take into account the aspirations and needs of individual development. An essential HRD policy priority is enhancing employability both outside and inside the firm (Armstrong, 2014).

With the concept of HRD expanding considerably, it raises the question of how important an effective SHRD should be. From the various perspectives in the construction of the model, SHRD and strategic development concepts are designed under different foundations. Some research has a process perspective. To achieve SHRD, some views were built on contexts or various elements to achieve a SHRD approach. From a collection of important research efforts to present a model of SHRD as a guideline for the development of employee performance and the performance of the above organization, it can be seen that each conceptual perspective and sub-element of SHRD are focused on two levels. They focused on the development of employee performance and building the performance of the organization as shown in a wide variety of SHRD models today. In an effort to find the elements of SHRD from academic papers, it can be seen that most of them aim to create an organizational context that supports the development of people in the organization rather than presents the role of learning and development activities based on the existing HRD concept, e.g. Garavan (1991); Garavan (2007); Grievies (2003) as well as Armstrong (2014) who proposed both organizational and developmental contexts. This direction was similar to the statement of Lyons (2016) that SHRD in particular focused on organizational level relating to implementation and measurement systems. Furthermore, according to Garavan & Carbery (2012), the defining characteristic of SHRD is aligning and integrating workforce training and development plans.

Employee Performance

The efficiency of the employees was considered from the results of the employees accumulated from the skills, efforts and the ability to jointly increase productivity in order to achieve the organization's goals (Sangperm & Jermsittiparsert, 2019; Jermsittiparsert,

Chankoson, Malik & Thaicharoen, 2021). Among the number of researchers looking at the diversity of the components of performance, Borman & Motowidlo (1993) divided the performance into two parts. The first part was the task performance, which consisted of various tasks that were the main activities of the organization, such as production, marketing, and purchasing, etc. The other was the contextual performance, which was a performance that was not a direct role but a context-related work. The concepts of employee performance suggested by most scholars were based on the extension of two key components: task performance and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). The efforts in finding the more comprehensive components of the performance were mainly related to the search for behavior that affected the employee performance in the organization, such as (Johnson, 2003; Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006; Audrey & Patrice, 2012; Koopmans et al., 2014), etc. However, under the behavioral controversy, (Motowidlo & Schmit, 1999) described the performance view of the sum of behavior that people expected to receive from that employee in contributing to the organization under his or her work environment. Those considered highly effective in their work often got employment priorities from the organization when compared with less efficient employees.

Relationship between SHRD and Employee Performance

Employee performance is a variable as this paper aims to find out in what ways organizations can generate efficiency through SHRD. In terms of performance, a number of academic works have been studied in different perspectives in order to lead to good employee performance. Academic work examples, such as those of Shields, et al., (2015), indicated that employee performance was divided according to the level of work performed by the employees and their responsibilities, and found that employee performance at each level was relevant to results and success. The focus of this study is on defining two key components of SHRD. The developmental context aims to enhance learning and development in line with the organization's strategy for individuals at different levels. This can be based on studies of the relationship of HRD and employee performance, which are widely accepted as being related. The results of recent studies continue in the same direction, for example, the study result of Lyons (2016) illustrated that SHRD affected organizational performance with highest factor loading value of workforce-focused result variable, indicating that this variable was closely associated with the factor. In addition, Mohanad & Ibrahim (2019) found a significant and positive relationship between HRD constructs and employee performance. The relationship obtained in the above research on the composition of SHRD for an effective performance of employees and organizations was still rooted in the concept of Garavan (1991); Grievess (2003).

Mediating Role of Employee Commitment

When discussing the effect of employee commitment or engagement into account, it could be caused by a number of factors, such as the study of Kamau (2015) regarding factors influencing employee commitment and its impact. The gist of the study suggested that their commitment is influenced by the level of training and development conducted by the organization. SHRD was an elevated perspective on the development of the original HRD concept with relevant research in the same direction as organization commitment. On the contrary, when considering employee commitment as an independent factor, contributing to employee performance, one person's relationship with another in the work environment often showed the bond between employees and related organizations. Such commitments between each other were measured in terms of employee productivity and organizational policies. It can

be concluded that commitment to work in the organization was composed of employee behavior, focusing on real career commitment that provided concrete internal and external substantive material environments within the organization and retaining the organization's employees. Career commitment was based on the performance of the employees receiving and appreciating the temptation to match the performance that might be rewarded as well as the organization's returns. In other words, the career commitment supported organizational goals. This study analyzed various theories, focusing on the conceptualization model of Meyer & Allen (1997) in designing the observed variables to study the relationship between factors.

Over the years, research studies looking at similar relationships with career commitment were defined and measured in a number of ways. This might complement the treatment and stimulation of employee behavior or represent the bond that people in the organization had. The first example was that of Rehman, et al., (2013) who studied the influence of factors affecting organizational commitment. The results proved that compensation and work had a significant influence on the organization commitment to general education while career development had no impact on the commitment of the organization in Pakistan. Compensation affected higher commitment, which outweighed the nature of the work for which the employees were responsible. Another study, Alfes, et al., (2013), demonstrated that employee engagement was positively connected to task performance and mediated the relationship between perceived human resource management practices and task performance.

HYPOTHETICAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The proposed hypothetical model describing the relationships of SHRD and employee performance and employee commitment is presented in Figure 1.

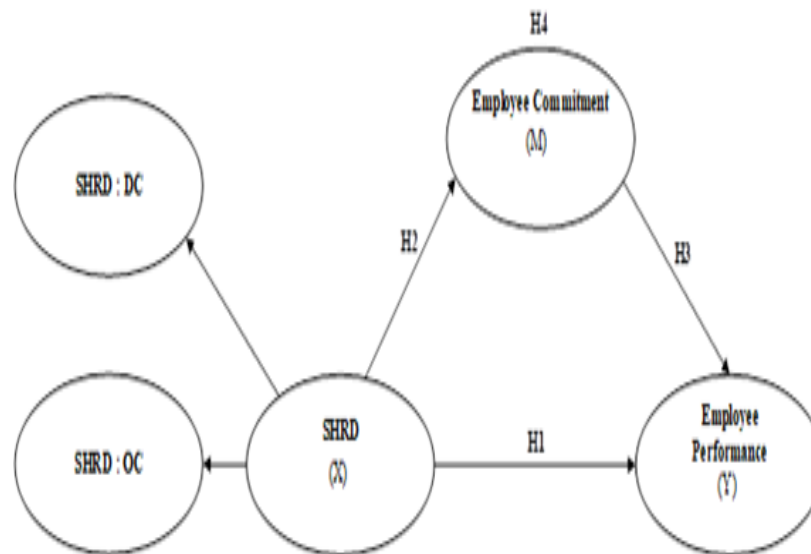


FIGURE 1
HYPOTHETICAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

The following research hypotheses were based on the research questions mentioned above.

- H1: *SHRD has a positive effect on employee performance of Thailand's SOEs listed companies*
 H2: *SHRD has a positive effect on employee commitment of Thailand's SOEs listed companies*
 H3: *Employee commitment has a positive effect on employee performance of Thailand's SOEs listed companies*
 H4: *Employee commitment significantly mediates the relationship between SHRD and employee performance of Thailand's SOEs listed companies*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used questionnaires as a tool to collect data. The question types were closed-ended questions. The numerical rating scale was used to show the different levels. The questions to measure variables were five ranges of estimation scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. From the distributed online and paper questionnaires to employees of four Thailand's SOEs listed companies, 232 respondents returned them for the analysis. This sample size referred to the suggestion of Kline (2016) that the sample size of more than 200 cases was considered appropriate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the AMOS program. Based on the baseline analysis of a sample of employees of four Thailand's SOEs listed companies, there were 139 males or 59.9% and 93 females or 40.1%, aged between 30-39 the most, 37.9%, followed by 40-49 years, as well as under 30 and 50 years and over with the proportion of 25.4%, 19% and 17.7%, respectively. Most of the samples had a bachelor's degree and postgraduate at 45.7% and 34.9%, respectively. As for the working age in the organizations, it was found that each sample group was not much different. About half of the samples had worked in the organizations for more than 10 years, and almost 60% had been in their current position for more than five years.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using the SEM analysis were employed to find the existing relationships among the latent variables. The review results according to the study purpose showed four latent variables from the three main research constructs; one higher order construct namely SHRD as an exogenous variable with two components, which were Developmental Context (DC) and Organizational Context (OC), and two endogenous, which were (1) Employee Commitment (EC) and (2) Employee Performance (EP).

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the respondent characteristics, the correlation between the pairs of observed variables, and the correlation coefficients of all pairs were positively correlated. It showed the correlations of observed variables. When considering the correlation of observed variables in each construct, it was found that the mean had significantly higher correlation than the correlations of the different constructs, indicating that different latent variables had little correlation. In addition, observed variables averaged between 3.493–3.995, and standard deviations were between 0.695 – 1.003 on five measurement scales. Considering skewness and kurtosis, Kline (2016) suggested that the data in the model should have skewness= ± 3 , kurtosis= ± 8 , which meant that the data had a normal distribution. The results of skewness from -0.627 to -0.315 and kurtosis from -0.447 to 0.919 were found to be in line with Kline's criteria. Therefore, the data in this study had normal distribution characteristics suitable for analysis.

Furthermore, in assessing the overall measurement model, three research constructs: one higher order construct namely SHRD as an exogenous variable with two components—

Developmental Context (DC) and Organizational Context (OC), and two endogenous—(1) Employee Commitment (EC) and (2) Employee Performance (EP) in the proposed model were tested with CB-Based SEM, and the three stage testing process were adopted; measurement model testing, discriminant validity testing and structural model testing. According to the step of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the results of the measurement model testing revealed support for the five-construct model indicating the exclusiveness of the constructs used ($\chi^2/df.=1.540$, $GFI=0.942$, $AGFI=0.904$, $CFI=0.990$, $TLI=0.986$, $RMSEA=0.052$, $RMR=0.019$, $PClose=0.429$). For the scales' reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated for all latent variables' measurement scales as shown in Table 1.

Construct & Indicators	Standardized Loadings	Indicator Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
SHRD			0.973	0.958	0.918
Developmental Context: DC	0.962	0.925	0.926	0.921	0.816
DC1 (individual learning)	0.886	0.758			
DC2 (emotional intelligence development)	0.868	0.753			
DC3 (strategic capability development)	0.954	0.91			
Organizational Context: OC	0.955	0.912	0.974	0.974	0.883
OC1 (top management support)	0.928	0.861			
OC2 (HRD policies and plans)	0.972	0.945			
OC3 (HRD professional roles)	0.934	0.872			
OC4 (supervisor involvement)	0.908	0.824			
OC5 (evaluation of HRD)	0.956	0.914			
Employee Commitment: EC			0.904	0.91	0.773
EC1 (continuance commitment)	0.816	0.666			
EC2 (affective commitment)	0.881	0.776			
EC3 (normative commitment)	0.937	0.878			
Employee performance: EP			0.918	0.944	0.849
EP1 (task performance)	0.949	0.901			
EP2 (contextual performance)	0.874	0.764			
EP3 (adaptive performance)	0.94	0.884			
$\chi^2/df.=1.540$, $GFI=0.942$, $AGFI=0.904$, $CFI=0.990$, $TLI=0.986$, $RMSEA=0.052$, $RMR=0.019$, $PClose=0.429$					
Note: all indicators are significant at $p>0.001$, the path of DC, DC1, OC1, EC1, and EP1 were fixed to 1 (not estimated).					

The results above revealed that all scales were reliable. As summarized in the table, standardized factor loading for all variables was higher than the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of all measurement scales was between 0.904 – 0.973 exceeding suggested thresholds (>0.70). The convergent validity of all measurement scales was confirmed, as the Composite Reliability (CR) and

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all measurement scales were higher than the suggested value of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). Thus, it provided evidence in support of the measures' reliability (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010).

In testing construct validity, the discriminant validity was applied. It referred to the extent in which the construct was actually different from another construct. It also measured the degree of differences between the overlapping constructs. The discriminant validity could be evaluated by Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015).

	Fornell-Lacker criterion			HTMT _{.85}		
	SHRD	EC	EP	SHRD	EC	EP
SHRD	0.958					
EC	0.799***	0.879		0.774		
EP	0.754***	0.756***	0.921	0.738	0.773	

The result of the discriminant validity assessed by Fornell-Lacker criterion was presented in Table 2. This assessment compared the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlation of latent constructs. Regarding the criteria, the latent construct should explain better the variance of its own indicator rather than the variance of other latent constructs. Therefore, the square root of each construct's AVE should have a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the constructs' discriminant validity has been established that the square root of each construct's AVE is higher than its correlation with another construct. Then, the HTMT criteria were analyzed for each pair of constructs on the basis of the item correlations. The computation yielded the value of 0.738 in respect of HTMT (SHRD, EP) and 0.774 in respect of HTMT (SHRD, EC). Comparing these results with the threshold values as defined in HTMT.85 gave rise to discriminant validity, because all comparisons inviolate the 0.85 criteria (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). Thus, the Fornell-Lacker and HTMT results revealed that discriminant validity had been established. Thus, it could be concluded that the hypothetical model was valid for the current study.

Structural Model Testing

The fit indices for the modified model represented by χ^2/df ratio was 1.540, which enhanced the acceptability of the model as it was within the acceptable range of ≤ 5.00 . Other fit parameters of the comparative fit index (CFI=0.990) and the Tucker-Lewis index (also called the non-normed fit index or NNFI) (TLI=0.986) was higher than the accepted standard value of 0.90; as well as the root mean square of approximation (RMSEA=0.052) was lower than the accepted standard value range of 0.08; and PClose (=0.429) was higher than the accepted standard value 0.05. Overall, results found that the model had an acceptable goodness of fit (Gaskin & Lim, 2016).

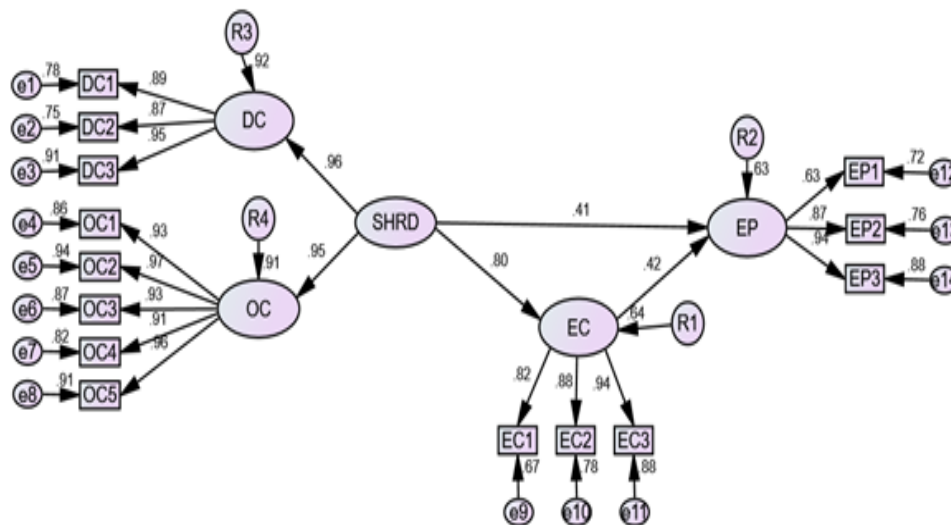


FIGURE 2
RESULTS OF TESTING HYPOTHETICAL MODEL

Direct influence	β	b	SE	t-test	Results	
H1: SHRD \rightarrow EP	0.414***	0.356	0.082	4.36	Significant	Accept
H2: SHRD \rightarrow EC	0.799***	0.917	0.082	11.15	Significant	Accept
H3: EC \rightarrow EP	0.425***	0.318	0.071	4.458	Significant	Accept
Test of Indirect effects: EC as Mediator	β	Mediation		Results		
H4: SHRD \rightarrow EC \rightarrow EP	0.339**	Partial mediating		Significant	Accept	
p-value<0.01 *p-value<0.001						

According to Figure 2 and Table 3, having established the final structural equation model, it was possible to test the hypotheses developed for this research. These hypotheses could be tested by evaluating the path coefficients and the significance levels among the constructs in the model.

Analyzing the results showed that the impact of SHRD on employee performance (H1), had a significant positive effect ($\beta=0.414$, $p<0.001$). Further, the impact of SHRD on employee commitment (H2), had a significant positive effect ($\beta=0.799$, $p<0.001$). The impact of the employee commitment on the employee performance (H3), had a significant positive effect ($\beta=0.425$, $p<0.01$).

To further ascertain the effect of some variables on others, indirect effects were tested. The results presented in Table 3 indicate the importance of ascertaining these indirect effects. The results of testing the indirect effect could be explained that H4 was accepted. The employee commitment was proposed to mediate the relationship between SHRD and employee performance. The results from the bootstrapping revealed that the mediating effect of employee commitment between SHRD and employee performance was significant ($\beta=0.339$, $p<0.01$).

According to Baron & Kenny (1986)'s mediation analysis, if the path estimate from the independent variable to the dependent variable was significant when the mediator was included in the model, then partial mediation was justified. Thus, employee commitment could play the

partial mediation role between SHRD and employee performance of Thailand's SOEs listed companies.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The overall results showed that the empirical data supported all four proposed hypotheses. Regarding the total effects on employee performance, SHRD was the strongest effect among the independent variables, followed by employee commitment. The results of square multiple correlations also showed that SHRD could explain 63.8% of the variance in employee commitment, while two independent variables; SHRD and employee commitment jointly explained 63.4% of the variance in employee performance as shown in Table 4.

Independent variables	Endogenous variables					
	EC			EP		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
SHRD	0.799***	-	0.799***	0.414***	0.339**	0.754**
EC	-	-	-	0.425***	-	0.425***
	R ² =0.638			R ² =0.634		

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether SHRD affected employee performance. In the test results, SHRD's second order constructs indicated a significant contribution to employee performance. The results of this study certainly drew the same conclusions as the previous SHRD studies, including those of Lyons (2016); Mohanad & Ibrahim (2019) cited as examples. Under the developmental context construct, the most influential observed variable was strategic capability development (direct effect=0.95). In addition, the observed variables were put forward to test the influence of the organizational context construct. It was found that there was a positive correlation to employee performance at a significant statistical level. The most influential observed variable factor of the organizational context construct was supervisor involvement (direct effect=0.96). Moreover, in investigating the influence of employee commitment to test the influence of employee commitment as the mediator to search for the indirect effect between SHRD and employee performance, it was found that employee commitment is a partial mediation effect. This discovery supported the direction that if employees had a high commitment, it could serve organizations to meet objectives and strategic goals. The finding corroborated the study by Alfes, et al., (2013) which found that employee commitment acts as a mediator between human resource-related factors and performance.

Empirical evidence from the study provides guidelines to organizational management on the implementation of SHRD in the organizations that its elements should include organizational and developmental contexts. This should align with the organization's strategy to support the efficiency of employees' work. In addition, this study also supports previous studies that employee commitment could play an important role in independent variables, including the contribution of SHRD as an independent variable of this study affecting employee performance in a positive direction. The results of this study can be used to support the direction of human resource development of SOEs as these organizations have more outstanding work security and

welfare in the capacity of both the public and private sectors. Furthermore, the samples in the study have a tendency to work with the organizations for a long time. Therefore, the commitment to the organizations would better support the relationship of SHRD and employee performance.

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