



ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ORIENTATION AND SOFT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ORIENTATION IN THE MALAYSIAN HOTEL ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

It has been recognized that hotel organizations gain competitive advantage through their employees that are able and willing to provide quality service, through their expertise and ingenuity. The intangible work environment evolved and is personified by the organization culture. The Soft HRM focuses on treating employees as valued assets and a source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high-quality skill and performance. The objective of the research was to examine the relationship between the organizational cultural orientation and the Soft HRM orientation of selected hotel organizations in Malaysia. Specifically, it aimed to examine if there were similarities and differences in the culture-Soft HRM orientations and to determine if there was any association between these variables orientations with the turnover rates. It was proposed that when there was a high level of association between the two strategic orientations, the organization would be more effective, as indicated by the turnover rate of employees. The findings indicated there was an alignment between organizational culture orientation with the organizational Soft HRM orientation. However, partial support was found between culture-Soft HRM orientations with turnover rate. This study had contributed to a better understanding on the practices that relate to organizational culture orientation and Soft HRM orientation in the hotel organizations.

Key words: Culture Orientation, Soft HRM, Work Environment. Team Cohesiveness, Employee relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

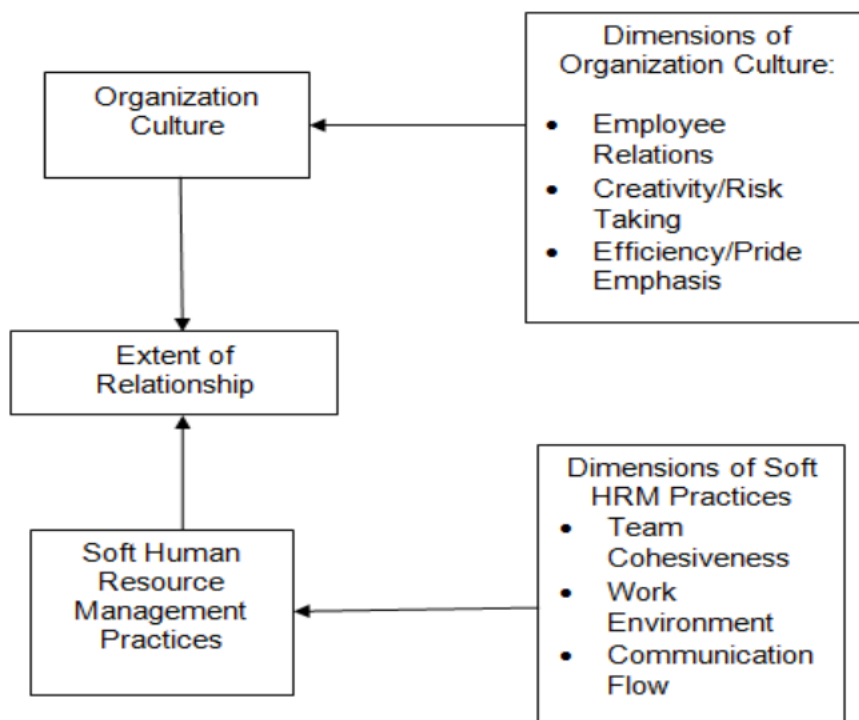
Human Resource Management (HRM) practices relate specifically to how people should be managed, and current thinking strongly suggest that human resources are uniquely important in sustaining business success. This is especially true for a hotel organization which depended heavily on the willingness and desire of its employees to extend quality service. Therefore, the significance of recruitment is recognized by the fact that organization gets satisfied with more productive employees. Not only it enhances productivity and profitability, but also encourages good relationships among the employers and the employees, which also contributes towards growth and development of the organization. (Recruitment and Selection, 2016)

The hotel organizations, therefore, gain competitive advantage through their able and willing employees, through their expertise and ingenuity, to work within the work systems effectively. The intangible work environment evolved and is personified by the organization culture.

The purpose of the study were to: (1) understand the systems and processes in the midscale and upscale hotel organizations, (2) find out the components of the systems and processes, (3) examine the soft Human Resources Management practices in the midscale and upscale hotel organizations, (4) find out the components of the soft Human Resources Management practices, and (5) determine the extent of relationship between the organization systems and processes with the soft Human Resources Management practices in the midscale and upscale hotel organizations.

The study proposed that there is no relationship between the organization systems and processes with the soft Human Resources Management practices in the midscale and upscale hotel organizations, or that the higher the hotel required the conformance to systems and processes, the lower would be the approach to the soft aspects of the Human Resource Management practices.

1.1. Study Framework



2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

Human Resource Management literature has been characterized by arguments on the issue of whether HR practices do indeed contribute positively towards organizational performance. Human resource management in enterprises has a far-reaching impact on the employee's organizational citizenship behavior, and its positive effect mainly reflects two aspects of organizational citizenship behavior (Li, 2014): benefit for individual's organizational citizenship behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. If the employees feel that the enterprises provide the better human resources management for them, then they will be mutually beneficial to show more organizational citizenship behavior. If employees feel that human resource management just pays attention to the interests of the enterprise, they will play a role in the occupation orientation of the inner, no higher efficiency of organizational citizenship behavior.

According to Robbin in his book *Organizational Behavior* cited Priyono (2011, p. 47) "organizational culture refers to a system of shared meaning shared by members - members who distinguish the organization from other organizations - organization. This system of shared meanings, when observed carefully, is a set of main characteristics valued by the organization".

It was suggested that culture should be defined as set of values and norms that are well understood and accepted by the majority of employees in an organization. Lizz Pellet from *The Cultural Fit Factor: Creating and Employment Brand that Attracts, Retains and Repels the Right Employees* (SHRM 2009) quote that organizational culture can be referred to as the glue that keeps an organization together. It is the silent code of conduct; it is more about how things get done, rather than what gets done. It can also be referred to as white noise, the background static that may affect you but goes unnoticed. When a new employee is learning the ropes, they are learning the culture.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study design was selected to determine the extent of relationship between culture and the Soft HRM orientations. A total of 21 hotels with midscale and upscale ratings were examined. Data were collected over a 3-week period via mail survey. It is a convenience sample, selected from the list of hotels in the Klang Valley area as published in the directory of hotels by Tourism Malaysia. The respondents represented those holding at least an executive level position in the human resource management department/division of the hotel. Secondary information was derived from research reports (thesis, and journal articles) and published data by Tourism Malaysia, Ministry of Tourism, and Economic Reports.

Two instruments were required for the study. These instruments consisted of structured questions aimed at identifying: (1) Organizational Culture, and (2) Soft HRM Practices, Organizational culture was measured on 3 dimensions: (1) Employee relations, (2) Creativity and risk-taking, and (3) Efficiency/Pride emphasis. The Soft HRM practices variable was also measured with 3 dimensions: (1) Team cohesiveness, (2) Work environment, and (3) Communication flow.

Organizational Culture

3 Dimensions

A. Employee Relations (4)

1. The employees trust the management
2. Employees have independence on how to do their job.
3. The organization encourages closeness among the employees at all levels.

4. Employees feel that the work that they do is meaningful to them

B. Creativity and Risk Taking (5)

1. Management encourages creativity amongst its employees
2. Employees are very innovative and enterprising
3. Employees feel that they are able to do their job
4. The organization believes in taking risks
5. Management is cautious in trying new ideas

C. Efficiency/Pride Emphasis (4)

1. The organization focuses on efficiency improvement.
2. The organization is solid and established in the industry
3. Employees feel safe in the organization
4. Employees are proud to be working for the organization

Soft HRM Practices

3 Dimensions

A. Team Cohesiveness (6)

1. The employees trust each other
2. Employees work as a team member
3. Employees are allow flexibility to learn about other employees' job
4. The organization is relationship oriented
5. Supervisor helps employees to build a cohesive team
6. Employees assist each other in carrying our their tasks

B. Work Environment (5)

1. The working climate is of trust and warmth
2. Employees have influence over what happens at their workplace
3. The environment in the organization is amiable/friendly
4. Employees are provided with comfortable rest and recreation areas
5. Supervisor is approachable to all employees

C. Communication Flow (6)

1. Employees appreciate management's approach in giving them accurate information
2. There are communication barriers among employees at different levels
3. Supervisor helps employees to understand why they need to complete task in a certain way
4. Supervisors briefed employees on development plans of the organization
5. Employees feel free to communicate with their supervisors any time
6. Employees are given feedback regularly on their performance

Scale: 4-point Likert-like scale

1	2	3	4
Very Low	Moderate		Very High

4. STUDY FINDINGS

An analysis of the respondents indicated that 67% held positions as either personnel executive or training manager, 19% were human resource managers, while 14% were Human resource supervisors. On average, the hotels have 395 rooms and the average number of frontliners was 63 or 33% of the average total of 190 employees.

4.1. Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture is defined as pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individual employee understands organizational functions. It also provided them with the norms for behaviour. The organizational culture orientation was tapped based on the combination of mean score derived on the 3 dimensions.

Employee relations indicated the level of trust or closeness between management and employees. It was encouraging to note that employees generally did trust management, and to a slightly lesser extent, the organization did encourage some closeness between employees and management. Employees considered their work to be quite meaningful and they indicated that a somewhat high degree of interdependence is required in performing their tasks. Thus, overall the hotels generally did support employee relations activities.

Table 1 Employee Relations

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Employees trust management	3.66	Relatively trustful
2	Employees have interdependence on job	3.70	High level of interdependence
3	Organization encourages closeness	3.13	Quite high level of encouragement
4	Work is meaningful for employees	3.80	Very Meaningful
	Employee Relations	3.57	Very close/tight relationship

Creativity or Risk taking variable was aimed at finding out the level of management support for employees’ creativity and the acceptance of employees’ suggestions on job related improvements. As indicated in Table 2, management did encourage creativity among employees and that management did take risks in following through employees’ suggestions.

Table 2 Creativity/Risk Taking

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Management encourages creativity	3.24	Relatively high encouragement
2	Employees are innovative	3.00	Quite innovative
3	Employees feel able to do the job	2.14	Moderately felt able
4	Organization believes in taking risks	3.05	Quite believes in taking risks
5	Management cautious in trying new ideas	2.57	Moderately cautious
	Creativity/Risk Taking	2.80	Moderate level of creativity/risk taking

These probably also encouraged employees’ innovativeness. However, management remained slightly cautious in implementing new ideas as suggested by employees. In contrast, employees still felt apprehensive on their ability to do their jobs well. Thus, the overall the findings indicated that there were some support for creativity and risk taking activities by employees.

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Efficiency and Pride variables were intended to gauge the organizations' level of emphasis on efficiency and employees' feeling towards their jobs and the organizations. There were 4 items that were used in measuring these variables. The findings seemed to indicate that the hotels tended to over emphasized on efficiency as shown on Table 3. In contrast, employees did felt proud to work in the hotels and they also felt that they have job security. The employees also felt that their hotels were quite established in the industry. On the whole, it appeared that the employees' did felt proud working for their hotels.

Table 3 Efficiency/Pride Emphasis

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Focus on efficiency improvement	1.48	Slightly low focus
2	Organization is established in industry	3.00	Relatively established
3	Employees feel safe in organization	3.33	Quite safe
4	Employees proud to work in organization	3.38	Quite proud of work
	Efficiency/Pride Emphasis	2.80	Moderately emphasized

Overall, the organization culture appeared to be more open, in support for the organizations, and reflected the closeness between management and employees. The hotels generally did support activities that brought management and employees closer. Employees trusted management and that the organization did encourage closeness among employees. Evidence also indicated support for creativity and risk taking activities, and that employees also felt proud to work for the hotels, as indicated in Table 4 and Illustration 1.

Table 4 Organization Culture Orientation

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Employee Relationships	3.57	Very close/tight relationship
2	Creativity/Risk Taking	2.80	Moderate level of creativity/risk taking
3	Efficiency/Pride Emphasis	2.80	Moderately emphasized
	Organizational Culture	3.06	Relatively Open

Illustration 1

Organization Culture

Employee Relationships			
1	2	3	4
Alienate		3.57	Tight
Creativity/Risk Taking			
1	2	3	4
Conformance	2.80		Creative
Efficiency/Pride Emphasis			
1	2	3	4
No care	2.80		Pride
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE			
1	2	3	4
Conformance		3.06	Open

4.2. Soft Human Resource Management Practices

The Soft Human Resource Management practices stressed the ‘human’ aspects of HRM. There were 3 items that were used in combination to determine the overall inclination of the Soft HRM approached: the extent team cohesiveness, conditions of the work environment, and the pattern of communication flow.

Team cohesiveness looked into the bonding of employees and how well they performed as a group. There were 6 items that were used to gauge this aspect. The findings in Table 5, indicated that employees did trust each other and that they worked as a team. The employees were encouraged to learn from each others’ tasks and assisted each other in situations that called for their cooperation. The supervisors also helped to build team cohesiveness. Thus, the hotel organizations were relationship-oriented.

Table 5 Team Cohesiveness

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Employees trust each other	3.19	Moderate trust level
2	Employees work as a team	3.33	Quite high teamwork level
3	Encourage to learn each others’ tasks	3.28	Quite high level of encouragement
4	Organization is relationship oriented	3.29	Quite high relationship orientation
5	Supervisors help to build cohesive team	3.02	Somewhat high
6	Employees assist each other	3.19	Relatively high support
	Team Cohesiveness	3.22	Towards Group/team orientation

There were 5 items that were used to gauge work environment variable. Results in Table 6 indicated that there was trust and warmth in the work environment and employees had some influence at the workplace. The environment appeared to be quite amiable with employees having comfortable rest and recreation areas, and supervisors were also quite approachable. Thus, overall the work environment was considered to be quite conducive in supporting positive feeling for employees.

Table 6 Work Environment

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Working environment is of trust and warm	3.48	Very high level of trust and warmth
2	Employees have influence at workplace	2.95	Moderately high level
3	Environment is amiable	3.52	Quite high level of friendliness
4	Comfortable rest and recreation areas	3.19	Relatively comfortable rest areas
5	Supervisor is approachable	3.48	Quite approachable
	Work Environment	3.32	Conducive Work Environment

The information flow variable referred to the nature of communication related directly to tasks execution. The findings indicated that employees were appreciative of management in providing them with accurate information, as shown in Table 7. However, they also noted that there were some communication barriers. Employees were however, provided with quite clear explanation on the importance of their tasks and they were also briefed on development plans that were related to their tasks. Employees indicated that there was some level of open communications between them and their supervisors, particularly on performance feedback.

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Thus, overall there appeared to be positive two-way communication flow between management and employees as it relate to their tasks.

Table 7 Communication Flow

No	Factors	Mean Score	Level
1	Employees appreciate management giving accurate information	3.29	To a great extent
2	Communication barriers among employees	2.81	Minimal level
3	Explanation on importance of tasks	3.00	Clearly explained
4	Employees briefed on development plans	3.01	Briefing often provided
5	Communication with supervisors	2.64	To some extent
6	Regular feedback on performance	3.24	Regularly provided
	Communication Flow	3.00	Relatively open and clear communication

The Soft Human Resource Management practices generally indicated an overall inclination towards and support for activities that enhanced work environment, and supervisors and employees relationships as shown in Table 8 and Illustration 2. The organizations were relationship-oriented and supervisors helped in building team cohesiveness while at the same time, encouraged employees to learn from each other. The work environment was quite conducive in supporting employees' positive feeling and employees felt there was trust and warmth among them. They were also provided with comfortable rest and recreation areas, and they felt that supervisors were also relatively approachable. There were two-way communication flow between management and employees. Hence, overall the Soft Human Resource Management practices seemed to support teamwork in an amiable work environment.

Table 8 Soft HRM

No	Factors	Mean Score	Meaning
1	Team Cohesiveness	3.22	Towards Group/team orientation
2	Work Environment	3.32	Conducive environment
3	Communication Flow	3.00	Relatively Open with clear communication
	Soft Human Resource Management Practices	3.18	Inclination towards a Team and Friendly practices

Illustration 2

Soft HRM

Team Cohesiveness			
1	2	3	4
Individual		3.22	Group
Work Environment			
1	2	3	4
Isolation		3.32	Conducive
Communication Flow			
1	2	3	4

Limited		3.00	Open
SOFT HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES			
1	2	3	4
Individual/Distance		3.18	Team/Friendly

As shown in Illustration 3, the overall organization culture orientation appeared to be open, in support for the organizations, and reflected the closeness between management and employees. The hotels generally did support activities that bring management and employees closer. Employees trusted management and that the organization did encourage closeness among employees. Evidence also indicated support for creativity and risk taking activities in the hotels, and that employees also felt proud to work for the hotels. Similarly, the overall Soft HRM orientation was also leaning towards employee-centered with friendly approaches, for example the emphasis on team building an amicable work environment. Thus, the overall variance between the two orientations was very minimal at 0.12 which indicated a good match.

Extent of Association between Organizational Culture Orientation and Soft HRM Orientation

The overall organization culture orientation was 3.06, and the overall soft Human Resource Management orientation was 3.18. Thus, the difference between the two mean scores was 0.12 or 4%. It was determined that if the percentage difference was 5% or below, there would be a full relationship, if the difference was over 5% but under 11%, then there would be a Partial Relationship, and if the difference is over 11%, then there would be no relationship. Therefore it could be concluded that there was a Partial Relationship between organization culture orientation and soft Human Resource Management orientation, as shown in Table 9

Table 9 Extent of Association between Organizational Culture Orientation and Soft HRM Orientation

Variable	Mean Score	Variance	Extent of Relationship
Organizational Culture Orientation	3.06	0.12 (4%)	Full Relationship
Soft HRM Orientation	3.18		

The variance between the mean score for culture orientation and Soft HRM orientation, as illustrated in Table 10, was also calculated as follows: Category 1 indicated a Good Fit if the variance between the two means score is less than 0.50. Category 2 showed an Average Fit if the variance fell between 0.51 and 0.75. Category 3 assumed a Poor Fit if the variance was above 0.76. In comparing the Culture orientation with the Soft HRM orientation, as shown in Table 10, it was found that there was a good fit in a total of 13 hotels or 62%, an average match in 6 hotels or 29%, whilst there was a poor match in only 2 hotels or 9%. It was determined also that a Full Relationship would require a good fit of over 50%, a partial Fit would be between 25% to 50%, and no fit would be a match of below 24%. Therefore, it could be concluded that there was a Full Relationship between the Organizational Culture with the Soft Human Resource Management practices.

Table 10 Relationship between Cultural Orientation and Organization Soft HRM Orientation with Turnover

CASES	(A) CULTURAL ORIENTATI ON	(B) SOFT HRM ORIENTATI ON	(A-B) VARIANCE	(C) DEGREE OF STRATEGIC MATCH*
1	2.93	2.92	0.01	Category 1
2	3.33	3.36	0.03	Category 1
3	3.10	2.92	0.18	Category 1
4	2.73	3.22	0.49	Category 2
5	3.73	3.61	0.12	Category 1
6	3.10	3.03	0.07	Category 1
7	3.23	3.58	0.35	Category 2
8	3.00	2.86	0.14	Category 1
9	2.93	2.69	0.24	Category 1
10	3.00	3.22	0.22	Category 1
11	2.93	3.00	0.07	Category 1
12	3.03	3.31	0.28	Category 2
13	2.93	3.28	0.35	Category 2
14	3.17	3.67	0.50	Category 2
15	3.10	3.19	0.09	Category 1
16	3.33	3.06	0.27	Category 2
17	2.77	3.36	0.59	Category 3
18	3.03	3.67	0.64	Category 3
19	2.70	2.83	0.13	Category 1
20	3.03	2.83	0.20	Category 1
21	3.10	3.25	0.15	Category 1
MEAN	3.06	3.18	0.12	

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to examine the hotel organization culture orientation and the Soft HRM orientation. The organization culture orientation was relatively open and in support for employee-employee and employee-management relationships, some organizational support for employees' creativity and risk taking activities and employees' pride with their organizations. The Soft Human Resource Management orientation seemed also to be employee-oriented with support for teamwork, with an amicable work environment and support for activities that enhanced work environment, employee-supervisors relationships, and encouragement for communication flow between management and employees.

Therefore, overall there was a Full relationship between organizational culture orientation with the organizational Soft HRM orientation as indicated by a good match in 62% of the hotels, and the size of the variance was at 4%. Thus, the findings in this study have contributed to a better understanding on the practices that relate to organizational culture orientation and Soft HRM orientation in the hotel organizations. However, further empirical studies needed to be conducted to strengthen the findings from this initial case study on 21 hotel organizations. Regardless, this study has provided insights into some human resources related practices in the hotel organizations.

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