

Employee Relationship Management and Employee Performance: An Impact Study

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Abstract: *The current research investigates the relationship between employee relationship management (ERM), job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational effectiveness from an emerging market perspective. To empirically test the hypothesized model, we conducted SEM analysis on 458 opinion survey responses collected from steel manufacturing units in India. As a whole, the research results show that ERM has a strong and positive effect on job satisfaction and job involvement. In addition, the ERM to employee performance relationship was one of the positive and statistically significant pathways established. The study further determined the effect of job satisfaction and job involvement as potential moderators. The results enrich the knowledge on the phenomena. Also, the results assist HR managers and policy makers to formulate more effective strategies aimed at using employee relationship-building mechanisms for organizational process facilitation.*

Keywords: *Employee relationships, Performance, Job satisfaction, Organization, Job involvement*

Introduction

With the inception of ERM around 10 years ago, employee relationship management originally started to surface in research and practice on a more occasional basis. This was the case both in practise and in research. It is demonstrated that CRM was involved in the creation of ERM by the fact that it was clearly cited in nearly all of the contributions (Du & Wang, 2022; Strohmeier, 2013; Abdullahi, et al., 2023). CRM's participation

in the development of ERM is backed up by the fact that it was explicitly acknowledged in nearly every one of the contributions. This conceptual drive offers an initial justification for the formation of the ERM as it is obvious that the pre-existence of an already accepted thought contributed to the creation of the ERM (Dewnarain et al., 2019; Juanamasta et al., 2019). This justification is provided by the fact that the prior existence of a

before accepted notion contributed to the creation of the ERM. This is because the conceptual push offers a preliminary rationale for the enhancement of ERM (Zhang, 2021). In addition, there were and still are a great deal of remarkable parallels between the many environmental conditions that had a role in the development of CRM (Strohmeier, 2013).

Management focuses on both the strategic and operational dimensions of employee relationship management. As an essential element in human resource functions, employee performance is dependent on employee relationships serving the purpose of motivation and retention (Li et al., 2021; Men et al., 2020). In light of the fierce competition in business today, it is essential that the relationship between employers and employees be maintained. Correspondingly, integrating the continuous engagement from both ends to obtain the organizational objectives is worthwhile (Jiang & Shen, 2023; Liu-Lastres et al., 2024). Granted, due to varying commitments, schedules, and work obligations, supervision of employees in real life can become a challenging job.

Despite acknowledgement from the research community and policymakers, the role of performance management systems has remained under-explored, especially in the developing countries. In response, this research attempts to investigate the linkage between ERM, job satisfaction, job involvement, and performance of employee from an emerging country perspective. The findings are expected to contribute newer insights towards advancing the conceptual understanding as well assist the practitioners to devise strategies for effective implementation of ERM in the steel manufacturing organizations to empower the employees. The subsequent sections discuss the relevant literature, methods, analysis, and points out the limitation and avenues for further research.

Review of literature

Linkage between employee relationship management and employee performance

Employee relationship management is a business management process that focuses on building, maintaining and nurturing good relationships between employees and the organization. It aims to improve individual relationships, enhance employee engagement and performance, develop strong business partnerships, resolve performance issues and set goals for the future of all relationships within the firm (Rahman & Taniya, 2017; Jiang & Shen, 2023). The interrelatedness of employee relationship management and employee performance has been a topic of research for decades. A growing body of literature supports the interdependency between these two concepts with respect to predicting employee behavior, decision making, and well-being (Nguyen et al., 2020). Employee relationship management (ERM) is often interrelated with employee performance. It consists of attaining a positive work climate and creating opportunities for people to fulfil their potential, development and personal satisfaction (Parashkati et al., 2020; Zhang, 2021). ERM also includes career planning, maintaining appropriate job descriptions, developmental opportunities, organizational self-development, team-building activities, etc.

Managing relationships within an organization is a critical aspect of any company's strategic business model. The target is to foster an environment where employees are motivated, productive, fulfilled, and loyal. Employee relationship management revolves around establishing and sustaining positive relationships with employees by ensuring that all employees feel valued, respected, and involved (Alsafadi & Altahat, 2021). This is oriented toward promoting employee development, satisfaction, and retention. Employee relationship management goes beyond engagement; it stands for employees' actual productivity. The goal is to develop an atmosphere where people feel appreciated and regarded.

Linkage between employee relationship management and job satisfaction

A strong relationship between an organization and its employees is vital to the success of any business. This is because a healthy relationship between leaders and employees enables them to work together as a team to achieve their common goals (Paramita et al., 2020). When building relationships with employees, leaders need to recognize the importance of establishing trust and respect (Chaubey et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2011). Employees who feel respected and appreciated will be more likely to stay with the company longer, be more engaged in their work, and be more productive than other employees. Tansel and Gazioglu (2013) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction, company characteristics, and managerial interactions through research conducted at the Department of Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom. According to the findings of the study, job satisfaction plays an important role in fostering positive relationships between employees and employers, as well as in creating opportunities for more effective relationship management. The relationship between employees and business owners is one of the most important factors in the expansion and development of a company as well as the high level of job satisfaction experienced by employees (Hajjali et al., 2022).

Mediating role of job satisfaction

Organizations' success and long-term growth depend on how well they manage their relationships with their employees. Employee relationship management is a good way to deal with problems that aren't always clear when it comes to productivity and growth (VRiyanto et al., 2021; Sabuhari et al., 2020). Through employee relations, both the business and its employees can come out on top. Maintaining positive working relationships between employers and employees enables an organization to maintain

its capacity for locating and exchanging information as well as rapidly adapting to changing circumstances (Wargborn, 2008). Gegax (2006) says that the effect of a company's employees having good relationships with each other is more positive in all ways than the employee's performance alone. The continued existence of every organization is heavily dependent on its workforce. Because employees are an organization's initial consumers, it is imperative that their requirements be met before those of other customers (Alromaihi et al., 2017; Abilash & Siju, 2021).

Linkage between employee relationship management and job involvement

Wang et al. (2018) explored the behavior of employees known as "whistleblowing," which might be encouraged by positive connections in the workplace. The findings of the study are contradictory when it comes to determining whether or not the employee intended to blow the whistle. According to the findings, there appears to be a curve-linear link that exists between interpersonal ties and behavior including whistleblowing. Kuzu and Ozilhan (2014) did a study to find out how employees' relationships with each other and how much information they shared affected their total achievement at five-star hotels in Antalya, Turkey. The empirical research shows that there is only a moderate link between how well employees get along with each other and share information and how well they do their jobs. But this link can be made stronger by things like job fulfillment, the environment at job, inspiration, and so on (Aruldoss et al., 2021). Further, healthy relationship between employees and their employers as well as employees and their organizations is essential to the development of trust and the efficiency of organizations (Jung et al., 2021). Onyango (2014) conducted research in Nairobi, Kenya, to investigate the efficiency of enterprise risk management (ERM) methods in big civil society organizations. The level of training support offered by the employer

encourages employees to participate to the qualitative development of the employer-employee relationship with their involvement in the jobs.

Job involvement as a mediator

Gambeta Et Al. (2019) analyzed attitudes of stakeholders in an organization toward the results of the organization and the personnel involved. Based on the research, a good rapport between an employer and an employee probably adds more to a healthy relationship than to the increase of exploration activities (Yandi & Havidz, 2022). More, the balance of influence that the company has with its employees has an opposite effect on innovation and market value of the company towards which is achieved. Conversely, it was found that the intricate balance between the firm and the stakeholders was an influence which worsened both positive and negative impacts of the firm's interaction with its employees (Abugre & Nasere, 2020). Training is an employee development and performance enhancement intervention that is planned in advance according to Chiaburu and Tekleab (2005). Employee training refers to the practice of helping employees develop better skills, know-how, and attitudes towards their work according to Nguku (2006). This helps the employees to become more active and perform their job better. Taking into consideration the discussion above, we formulate the following hypotheses that will later be evaluated using SEM analysis.

H1: There is a significant relationship between employee relationship management and employee performance in the steel industries of Odisha.

H2: Employee relationship management positively and significantly affects job satisfaction.

H3: Job satisfaction has a mediating impact in the link between employee relationship management and employee performance.

H4: There is a significant relationship between employee relationship management and job involvement.

H5: Job involvement mediates the relationship between employee relationship management and employee performance.

Methodology

Research Participants and Instrument

Based on the study objectives, the primary data was gathered through survey questionnaires from the employees of the selected steel manufacturing companies in Indian context. The basic purpose of this study revolves around assessing the role of employee relationship management towards influencing employee performance. The sample respondents were approached to seek their approval to voluntarily participate in this opinion-based survey. The participants were completely assured that their responses will be kept confidential and only used for academic research purposes. Overall, the study involved distribution of 550 questionnaires among the survey participants, out of which 473 responses were returned. The gathered responses were initially examined to check for missing values, incomplete information, and redundancy issues. Based on this assessment, 15 responses were dropped from the final study sample. Therefore, the final sample comprises 458 responses that will be used to carry out other statistical tests. The response rate for the study was approx. 86% that implies that majority of the respondents filled and returned the questionnaire. This can be considered a positive sign for the research study and implies minimal sampling bias.

Data Analysis and Results

Reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire)

The present research conducted a perception-based survey using questionnaires to gather the relevant data from the employees of selected steel manufacturing companies. This section assesses the reliability of the items and constructs using the most widely used inter-reliability measure of Cronbach Q. The final scale includes 19 items that loaded on four constructs: ERM (5 items), JIN (5 items), JSA (4 items), and EP (5 items) In this regard, the overall scale shows the Cronbach Q value of .849. Nunnally and Bernstein (1978) suggests Cronbach α values exceeding .7 are

statistically appropriate and provides assurance regarding the reliability of the scale items. Therefore, the reliability estimation indicates appropriateness and replicability of the scale.

Preliminary statistics

At the outset, descriptive statistics and normality assessment were conducted to get relevant information about the item patterns and characteristics. The peripheral analysis aids towards an enhance understanding of the data properties using the mean, std. deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values. Therefore, the comprehension of descriptive measures establishes the normality of the dataset. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
ERM1	5.827	.9602	-1.124	1.641
ERM2	5.484	1.091	-.564	-.354
ERM3	5.810	.929	-.831	.333
ERM4	5.782	.966	-1.089	1.435
ERM5	5.836	.934	-1.190	2.391
JIN1	5.753	1.104	-1.028	1.274
JIN2	5.873	.919	-1.034	1.227
JIN3	5.810	1.004	-1.177	1.831
JIN4	5.771	1.082	-.867	.208
JIN5	5.947	1.204	-1.190	.939
JSA1	5.740	1.157	-.885	.269
JSA2	5.668	1.136	-.915	.847
JSA3	5.675	1.213	-1.025	1.056
JSA4	5.664	1.278	-.824	-.034
EPF1	5.465	1.026	-.951	-.271
EPF2	5.358	1.012	-.822	-.691
EPF3	5.437	1.134	-.892	-.401
EPF4	5.463	1.175	-.891	-.347
EPF5	5.441	1.209	-1.000	-.028

Note: ERM: Employee relationship management; JIN: Job involvement; JSA: Job satisfaction; EPF: Employee performance

Validation of the hypothesized model

Anderson and Gerbing (1992) recommended a series of two main steps to conduct the SEM procedure. The main aim of the initial step remains on assessing whether the measurement model deems appropriate, while the second step concerns the evaluation and validation of the structural model. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted in order to identify the constructs and the items that loaded on them based on factor loadings. Specifically, EFA process aims to reduce the study dimensions, assess the factor structure, and enhance the statistical power of the proposed model. Further, this research has used SEM over conventional regression analysis, due to the limitation that multivariate techniques such as regression can examine a single association at one point of time. However, application of this technique was carried out to examine the overall theory of research considering the available information. The extracted factors based on EFA were subjected to SEM to test the hypothesized links between the constructs of interest.

Assessing common method bias

Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) suggests Common Method Bias can lead to high measurement errors in the study data, which can result in confounding values during the empirical tests. This research has followed the guidelines of Conway and Lance (2010) to effectively tackle the CMB at the initial data collection stage. Further, the empirical assessment to estimate CMB was carried out with the help of Harman's single factor test (Harman, 1976; Byrne, 2010). Further, this study checked to find out any overlapping items in the overall scale. The process of CMB estimation requires maintaining respondent anonymity and confidentiality that aids proper assessment of the bias (if any) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Conway and Lance, 2010). Such steps were vital to minimize the effect of method bias in the study dataset.

Harman's single factor test

Prior empirical studies have suggested to implement Harman's single-factor test (HSFT) for evaluating the possible effect of CMB in the research dataset (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Hair *et al.*, 2010). In this context, the present research used EFA process that extracted six factors (incl. first-order and second-order factors). The extracted factors were selected based on the eigenvalue criteria of higher than 1, which implies the absence of a single dominant factor. Also, the extracted factors together contribute towards 76.431% of total variance in the dataset, where the first factor states 23.995% of the cumulative variance. Accordingly, this result falls within the threshold criteria of less than 50% variance, as recommended by Harman (1976). Hence, the dataset has a negligible presence of CMB that doesn't affect the empirical results and outcomes.

Evaluation of measurement model

The initial step in SEM comprises the assessment of the measurement model fit, which involves the study constructs and their respective items. In the present research, the measurement model includes six constructs- ERM, JIN, JSA, and EP. The items of these constructs contributed to their path towards the respective construct. Specifically, the measurement model that the constructs are independent of each other. Based on the evaluation of the model-fit values, the measurement model indicates appropriate fit ($\chi^2/df=2.387$, GFI=.929, RMSEA=.055, RMR=.049, CFI=.972, AGFI=.907, NFI=.953, $p<.001$).

Convergent and discriminant validity

The measure of convergent validity (CV) indicates the extent to which the construct items share a large common variance. To assess the CV, the composite reliability, std. factor loadings, and average variance extracted are estimated for

the research model. According to Hair *et al.* (2014), the items of the identified constructs should exhibit std. loadings >.5. Table 2 exhibits the CV of the model, where the AVE, CR, and std. factor loadings fall within the suggested levels.

Therefore, the research model involving the constructs of interest achieves adequate convergent validity, which implies that the constructs that are meant to be theoretically related are related with each other.

Table 2: Convergent validity measures for all the construct and items

Construct	Measurement item	Std. factor loadings	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted
Job satisfaction	JAS1	.881	.905	.705
	JAS2	.861		
	JAS3	.818		
	JAS4	.795		
Employee relationship management	ERM1	.740	.866	.565
	ERM2	.774		
	ERM3	.739		
	ERM4	.787		
	ERM5	.801		
Employee performance	EPF1	.871	.926	.617
	EPF2	.916		
	EPF3	.911		
	EPF4	.863		
	EPF5	.845		
Job involvement	JIN1	.781	.896	.633
	JIN2	.723		
	JIN3	.783		
	JIN4	.830		
	JIN5	.774		

Table 3 shows the square root of AVE values of constructs exceeds the shared variance between the constructs; thus, establishing the distinctiveness of each construct. Therefore, the

constructs that should not be theoretically related are unrelated. Accordingly, it can be inferred from the discriminant validity that the model constructs are unique and distinct from each other.

Table 3: Discriminant validity of the overall model

	ERM	EPF	JIN	JSA
ERM	<i>.752</i>			
EPF	.024	<i>.939</i>		
JIN	.321	-.014	<i>.785</i>	
JSA	.439	-.061	.502	<i>.839</i>

Note: Diagonal values in italics represent square root of the AVE values.

Based on the validity estimates and model-fit indices, it can be evidently observed that the measurement model achieves sufficient validity

(both convergent and discriminant). In addition, the fit indices of this model meet the recommended criteria.

Structural model and tests of hypotheses

The measurement model of the study achieved appropriate fit that is carried forward to the next step of examining the structural model. In this context, the assessment of structural model involves validating the hypothesized links between the study constructs, which was conducted using AMOS version 22. Based on

the model-fit assessment, the structural model shows the data fits the model well ($\chi^2/df=2.831$, GFI=.918, AGFI=.893, CFI=.963, TLI=.956, RMSEA=.063, RMR=.077, $p<.001$). Therefore, the structural model achieves satisfactory model-fit (Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 presents the empirical results of hypothesis testing, while the research model involving the path estimates of the inter-relationships between the constructs of interest.

Table 4: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesized Relationships	Standardized Beta values	t-value	Decision
H1: ERM → EPF	.465	6.370**	Supported
H2: ERM → JSA	.509	7.069**	Supported
H3: JSA → EPF (JSA) [#]	.650	8.025**	Supported
H4: ERM → JIN	.443	7.179**	Supported
H5: JIN → EPF (JIN) [#]	.589	7.551**	Supported

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Results for mediation analysis

Structural Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Percentile bootstrap 95% CI		Mediation Type
			Lower	Upper	
ERM → EPF (JSA) [#]	.465**	.185**	.146	.225	Partial
ERM → EPF (JIN) [#]	.465**	.124**	.109	.139	Partial

Note: [#]mediator in parenthesis, ** $p < .001$; bootstrap results based on 5000 samples

As the structural model exhibits appropriate model fit, the hypothesized paths between the study constructs were examined and validated to render support for their empirical relationships. The hypothesis testing results exhibit employee relationship management ($\beta = .465$ t-value = 6.370, $p < .001$) strongly drives employee performance in the steel manufacturing company settings, thus, supporting H1. This finding is in line with prior research (Atatsi et al., 2019; Otoo, 2019). Subsequently, this finding highlights the opinion of the respondents that within the employee relationship measures, such as training, regular communication, leadership styles will enhance the employee's favorable attitude towards the company that reciprocates into better performance.

Further, employee relationship management positively and significantly influences job satisfaction ($\beta = .509$, t-value = 7.069, $p < .01$), supporting H2, which shows the respondents feel that ERM measures are crucial to ensure satisfaction of the employees in the long-run. This finding lends support to the prior studies of Bulińska-Stangrecka & Bagieńska (2021) who also report similar findings regarding the positive link between ERM and job satisfaction in the organizational settings. Additionally, the link between employee relationship management and job involvement was found positive and significant ($\beta = .443$, t-value = 7.179, $p < .001$), which statistically validates H4. The finding supports the notion of Garcia et al. (2019) who reported the greater the level of involvement and participation of the employees, the higher will be the

performance outcomes.

Apart from the direct effects, this research also validated the mediating role of job involvement and job satisfaction. According to the mediation results, as shown in Table 8, job satisfaction and job involvement partially mediates the link between ERM and employee performance. These findings are vital from the organizational perspective, since it provides a clear-cut idea about the importance of involving employees in the decision-making process. Therefore, H3 and H5 is statistically validated and supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

The relationship between the employees and organization has become vital, owing to the intense business competition in the contemporary times (Dewnarain et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Accordingly, it makes complete sense to streamline the process of constant interactions between these stakeholders to achieve the organizational goals. However, managing employees can become a tedious task in the real-time environment due to different schedules, responsibilities, and work requirements. Owing to the notion that ERM is still in the beginning phases of its development, there is still a less agreement and a less knowledge around it (Jhamb et al., 2022; Onkila & Sarna, 2022). When employee relationship management (ERM) is defined as a specific strategy (Wargborn, 2009), as specific HR practises (Balthazard, 2006), or as specific HR information systems (for example, SAP) (for example, Shapiro, 2007), there is no definition that is generally accepted, and the few clear ones that do exist tend to be ambiguous or produce quite distinct understandings. However, the concept of ERM can be measured after having a clear idea regarding its vital dimensions, which has been under-explored in the existing literature. Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to understand the ERM process, which can help towards optimum utilization of the employee

potential to achieve desired performance outcomes. In response, this research attempts to address this vacuum in literature by validating the research model involving ERM, job satisfaction, job involvement, and employee performance in Indian steel manufacturing context. The findings add to the limited knowledge on vital aspect of managing employee relationships, especially in the emerging market perspective. Based on the extant literature review, the links between ERM, job satisfaction, job involvement, and employee performance were empirically validated using SEM analysis. This contribution is a novel attempt to provide relevant information about the nature and significance of the ERM dimension, which can help to enhance the domain knowledge. Also, it can encourage more exploration about the ERM concept by the scholars working in the HR domain. The empirical findings also provide cues to the HR managers, senior management, and policymakers to formulate and redesign their strategies to ensure the employees are treated fairly and involved in the organizational decision-making process. In the long-run, the organizational focus should be on building enduring relationships with their employees for enhancing their performance outcomes. This research has certain limitations that can pave the way for future research in this domain. Firstly, the data collection was cross-sectional in nature that limits the understanding of the model constructs. Therefore, the future researchers can consider implementing longitudinal methods to overcome this lacuna. Also, the future researchers can adopt other mediating variables like organizational culture, etc. to get a better perspective on implementation of the performance management systems. Finally, the implementation of qualitative techniques such as focus group discussions, interviews, etc., can be a fruitful way to capture the variation in the responses of the survey participants with reference to the constructs of interest.

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