

## *Original Paper*

# Measuring Mediating Effects of Intrapreneurship Mindset and Skills on Organizational Performance and Growth: An Empirical Investigation on Indigenous Organizations in Sri Lanka

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### ***Abstract***

*A well-crafted human resource strategy to nurture a corporate culture that helps cultivate risk-taking intrapreneurs is conducive for the success of the indigenous corporation in Sri Lanka. However, compared to multinational organizations, the implementation and measurement of employee's risk-taking readiness in indigenous enterprises, especially when introducing new business ventures, is lacking. Hence, this study aims to investigate how the intrapreneurial mindset and skills of employees in indigenous organizations are nurtured to influence organizational performance and growth. An online survey was administered using a random sample of 322 respondents selected from various indigenous business organizations registered at the Department of Registration of Companies, Sri Lanka. Data suggests that strategic human resource management activities at indigenous business organizations in Sri Lanka influence organizational performance and intrapreneurial skills and mindset. The findings make an important contribution to the existing body of literature by bridging the gap, establishing the importance of strategic human resource management. One of the limitations this study encountered was the number of elements selected to investigate in the overall HR process. This study has significant practical implications for senior managers and human resource managers in designing policies for indigenous organizations in Sri Lanka.*

**Keywords**

*multinational companies (MNC's), human resources management, intrapreneurial mindset and skills, organizational performance, and indigenous organizations*

**1. Introduction**

Emerging economies are experiencing exponential growth in venture growth. This burgeoning of ventures is apparent in regions, such as Asia and Africa. Further propelling new venture creation of businesses operating within countries in the regions above. As such, a significant level of structural change is demanded by the emerging venture growth. The above context has to be analyzed using a macro and micro-level parameter to understand the propensity of the new venture growth opportunities emerging in the said regions. There are key drivers that influence new venture growth in specific regions (Blesa et al., 2008). These drivers are; economic and technological growth, change of the political landscape, age structure of the population, emerging opportunities, and organizational readiness. Globalization is the process by which businesses develop international influence or start operating on an international scale and most scholars, such as Mudambi and Zahra (2007), Blesa et al. (2008), Sleuwaegen and Onkelinx (2014), and Puig et al. (2014) relate globalization to internationalization. The movement of new ventures was expected from emerging economies to third world economies, to lower the cost of production (Ripolles & Blesa, 2012). Globalization has opened doors for many organizations around the globe to start new business ventures beyond local boundaries. As a result, many indigenous businesses operating in Sri Lanka, have recently started looking for all the possibilities to capitalize on the opportunity of introducing their businesses to the global market. However, based on the current professional rhetoric, it is evident that employees (all levels) lack the motivation to take a risk when venturing into a new business locally or internationally. The most critical issue faced by indigenous organizations is to answer the question—how could an organization prepare competent local managers to manage current and future new ventures? Hence, it is paramount to nurture an organizational culture that encourages employees to cultivate intrapreneurial skills that positively impact the employee and organizational performance (Dessler, 1999). Based on the above premise, the key responsibility lies in the hands of the human resources department and the leaders of the organization to create a culture that nurtures and appreciates intrapreneurial efforts.

Corporate intrapreneurship helps achieve corporate sustainable competitive advantage through continuous exploration of new knowledge, employees' willingness to take risks, and the contribution of resources to support these behaviors, systems, and processes. Human resource activities are at the core of facilitating the above process (Amberg & McGaughey, 2019). As Han et al. (2019) note, the key focus of strategic human resource management is to establish the vertical and horizontal fit in organizations. This effort is challenged as the scale-related complexity increases. The vertical fit is the degree of the employee who works at different levels in the organization, understanding the overall corporate strategy implemented. In contrast, the horizontal fit is the degree of the coordination of

various functions, such as marketing, finance, operations, and services, in implementing the overall corporate strategy.

Based on a meta-review of strategic human resource management conducted by Jiang and Messersmith (2018), the following areas are outlined as critical contributions owing to the implementation of well-designed human resource management strategies; creating a sustainable competitive advantage, human capital established as a firm-level resource that can contribute to firm-level performance, individual performance functioning as employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunity to perform, affecting employee attitude and productive behavior. Kramer (2013) notes that employees' behavior is a contingent factor of the organizational climate. He explains that the organizational climate comprises many factors, such as leadership, culture, and strategic human resource management activities designed and implemented. One of the critical success factors for employees to perform at an optimal level will be determined by the amount of autonomy provided to make decisions factorizing the related degree of risk (Hattori et al., 2002). Many authors, such as Hattori et al. (2002), Kramer (2013), and Mudambi et al. (2007) contend that strategic human resource management activities designed and implemented in an organization should create an environment that encourages employee risk-taking intrapreneurial mindset and atmosphere to build and test their intrapreneurial skills in the organization. The findings of this empirical study validate the above emphasis of the above authors.

Dessler (2016) defines, recruitment as a process of identifying job vacancies, analyzing job requirements, and preparing suitable pools (sources) of applicants. The company will try to reach a pool of candidates through job postings, referrals, advertisements, or via college campus recruitment channels. Selection is a process of selecting and shortlisting suitable candidates (from applicants) with the necessary qualifications and skill set to fill the vacancies in an organization (Dessler, 2016). The selection process may vary from industry to industry, company to company and even amongst departments of the same company. The process depends on needs, the policies, and leadership styles. Candidates who respond (applicants) to these measures are then invited for interviews and other assessment methods. Employers may check the background of prospective employees, as well as check references. Kumari (2012) notes that better recruitment and selection strategies result in improved organizational outcomes. In this study, the author ascertains that the companies' portal is the most essential medium of hiring employees, and that current employees are the most reliable source of hiring the new employees. For Tomcikova (2016), the recruitment and selection practices are important for new and established businesses alike. The research concluded that investing in the development of a comprehensive and valid selection system is a productive and efficient investment. Human resource professionals must acknowledge that candidates look for many qualities in an organization when pursuing employment. Both, Kumari (2012) and Tomcikova (2016) do agree that to attract suitable candidates, organizations must provide not only a competitive salary, but also an environment and culture in which candidates will feel comfortable and can flourish.

Training and development are processes for performance improvement of individuals and groups of an organization. Training is a structured learning process that means sharpening skills, concepts, changing attitudes, and gaining more knowledge with the expectation of enhancing performance (Dessler, 2016). Chams and Garcia-Blandon (2019), describe the disciplines that promote “green” organizations as sustainable human resource management for sustainable development goals to be achieved through the adoption of new ecological techniques by the organization’s human capital and by the integration of innovative sustainable strategies. They identify the antecedents and outcomes of sustainable human resource management and highlight the obstacles to sustainable implementation at the firm’s level, and from an international perspective. The authors reviewed how sustainability is managed from all aspects of corporations through human resource development.

Griffith et al. (2019), state that firms consider leadership training and conduct succession planning according to the needs of expansion and future replacement. These needs are two distinct organizational initiatives to ensure longevity and sustainability. In recent years, scholars and practitioners also agreed that a new and more comprehensive approach considers the organization as a system (Griffith et al., 2019). Organizations should work to create internal leadership pipelines that span entry-level employees to executives. This is to leverage potential advantages associated with instituting comprehensive leadership pipelines and addressing practical concerns associated with risk and talent management. Griffith et al. (2019) proposed introducing incremental investment in organization-wide leadership development programs via distinct, evaluative stages—a real options reasoning (ROR) approach to leadership.

Employee performance evaluation is a complex process that involves performance benchmarking, designing evaluation tools and instruments, collecting data, processing data to analyze, validating the findings against benchmarks, and communicating with relevant parties to modify the behavior if needed (Lidinska & Jablonsky, 2018). Further, based on the argument of Stroea et al. (20219), performance is a function of (knowledge and other skills) and motivation (a measure of willingness to deliver performance). Performance evaluation should be linked to the overall organizational human resources strategy, where organizational goals and motivating factors through fringe benefits are aligned. Moreover, performance evaluation should be informative and directly influence many dimensions of employee outcomes, such as the bonus, merit pay, promotions, and at the base level, decisions to exit the firm. Based on Cappelli and Conyon (2018) contention, it is argued that employee performance also helps organizations to influence performance behavior of employees.

Employee benefits are an integral part of overall business operations. However, there is a substantial difference across the regions in the world. Brenner (2009) contends that cost is a key driver in designing employee fringe benefits. Brenner further ascertains that some companies use a counter-economic strategy when designing their employee fringe benefits, especially against the downturn of the global economy. Kruse (1992) notes that profit-sharing as an element of employee fringe benefit improves performance by increasing work effort, the skills of the workforce, and the

flow of information within the organization. Employee stock ownership has become the most recent addition to employee benefits. The arguments presented in favor include increased productivity, lower employee turnover, and reduced cost of raising equity capital (Livingston & Henry, 1980). Intrapreneurship is an extended theory of the entrepreneurship theory grounded in the body of knowledge in the recent past. Entrepreneurs seek opportunities to capitalize on taking the calculated risk involved to grasp related benefits to him or her. On the other hand, intrapreneurs project a similar behavior but with an additional intention of creating a win-win situation, where the benefits are yielded for both, the individual and the organization (Altinay, 2005). Strategic human resource management is at the core of an organization in facilitating a process that helps cultivate an organizational culture that encourages employees to transform from entrepreneurs to intrapreneurs. The facilitation process includes identifying the appropriate human capital that is more prone to be transformed as intrapreneurs at the point of selection and recruitment. The process strives to train, develop, and provide the most supportive tools in the form of resources to help them identify the risks, calculate, and take the risk when planning new ventures. This task should be performed essentially under two key perspectives: the attitude of the employees (behavioral) and the organizational processes (Jiang & Messersmith, 2018). Strategic human resource management activities set the appropriate organizational climate for employees to perform at the optimal level. As such, strategically planning all HR activities, such as recruitment, selection, placement, training, development, promotions, procurement, and retirement, should be planned and implemented to provide the organizational climate for employees to perform (Chams & Garcia-Blandon, 2019). The optimal level of employee performance positively influences the overall organizational performance and its growth. Based on the above premise, the following hypothesis is formulated;

H<sub>1</sub>: Strategic HRM activities in Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations influence organizational performance and growth.

The relationship between employee commitment and organizational success has often been described as a social exchange process (Altinay, 2005). Current literature has successfully examined the phenomenon with an emphasis on the mediating variables between employee commitment and organizational commitment. These mediating variables are job demands and resources, employee motivation, social exchange, economic exchange, transaction cost, conservation of resources, and diffusion of innovation (Dhameeth et al., 2014). Furthermore, organizational climate influences employee commitment while taking the risk, especially when moving into new venture. Therefore, strategic HRM activities should focus on developing an intrapreneurial mindset and skills to venture into new businesses in the future for organizational growth. The above premise paves the way to present the following hypothesis;

H<sub>2</sub>: Strategic HRM activities in Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations influence the intrapreneurial mindset and skills.

Strategic human resource management is at the core of an organization in facilitating a process that helps to cultivate an organizational culture that encourages employees to transform from being entrepreneurs to intrapreneurs. The facilitation process includes identifying the appropriate human capital that is more prone to be transformed into intrapreneurs at the point of selection and recruitment. Therefore, appropriate training and development, in addition to the most supportive tools in the form of resources are provided, to help them identify and calculate the risks, when planning a new venture. This task should be performed essentially under two critical perspectives: the attitude of the employees (behavioral) and the organizational processes (Jiang & Messersmith, 2018). Based on the above premise, the following hypothesis is presented;

H<sub>3</sub>: Intrapreneurial skills and mindset mediate the relationship between strategic HRM activities and organizational performance of Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations.

## 2. Method

This study applied a cross-sectional exploratory method to quantify the outcomes related to the phenomenon in the discussion. This cross-section of the total population was used to explore how the intrapreneurial mindset and skills of the employees in Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations influence organizational performance and growth. A unit of analysis in this study is the employees in Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations. The registry of business registration at the Department of the Registrar of Companies is used to draw a random sample. A sample of 322 respondents was randomly selected for the study (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This study measured strategic human resource management (selection, training, evaluation, and fringe benefits) as the independent variable, organizational performance, and growth as the dependent variable, while intrapreneurial mindset and skills were considered the mediating variable. Both independent and dependent variables are composite variables. These measurements were performed using a Likert Scale (1-5 scale); 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree to measure the dimensions related to the constructs in the above phenomenon studied. Primary data was collected using a validated structured questionnaire with a reliability score of Cronbach Alpha 0.98. There were three models built in the testing hypotheses developed. The first two models were developed based on a simple linear regression modeling to test the influence of strategic human resources management and intrapreneurship mindset and skills on organizational performance and growth of the organization, in contrast, the third model was developed based on a multiple linear regression modeling to test the mediating effects of intrapreneurial mindset and skills on the relationship between strategic human resource management and organizational performance and growth (Ranciati et al., 2019). Finally, the variables' path relationship was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) to investigate the multivariate relationship between the latent and observed variables and their related factor loadings (Hult et al., 2018). The results of the above tests are presented in the following sections in this manuscript.

### 3. Result

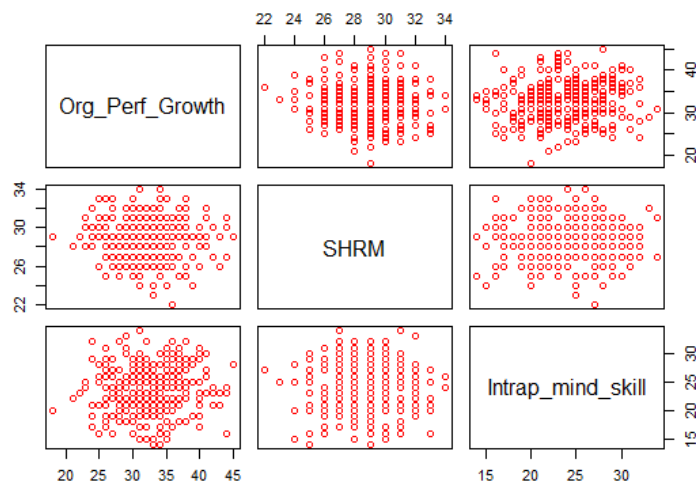
There were three variables and three hundred and twenty-two (322) observations in the dataset. In total, there were nine hundred and sixty-six (966) data points in the dataset. There were no missing data-points in all of the data points. The majority of the respondents (70) randomly selected were employed at leisure companies followed by industrial/manufacturing companies (58). The other categories in descending order are service (54), consumer retail (51), power and energy (47), and logistics (42). The highest number of respondents were managers (88) followed by 83 supervisors, 77 senior managers who are policymakers in organizations, and 74 HR managers and officers. Male representation of the respondents was 170, which is about 53%, while female representation was 152, which is about 47% of the total respondents. The total number of respondents between the ages of 45 and 55 years was 90 (28%) followed by a total of 88 respondents within the age of 25 and 35 years. The lowest age group of respondents were aged between 55 and 65 years (18%). The highest work experience category was between 1 and 10 years, with a total of 124 responses. The second highest work experience was recorded between 10 and 19 years. The lowest work experience reported was between 19 and 28 years, with 77 responses. 86 respondents, from the total sample population, have completed at a least diploma level of education while 82 possess vocational training, 79 have attained degrees, and 75 possess other qualification, such as certificate level education.

There are three key composite variables (strategic HRM, intrapreneurial mindset and skills, organizational performance and growth), 57 data points, and 322 observations spread across all the sections mentioned above. Each of the composite variables included in the research framework is treated with equal weight for computational purpose as assigned in the questionnaire. Preliminary cleaning of data was performed using Excel 2016 and loaded to the RStudio 4.0.3 version to perform the analytical procedure. As per the summary statistics (see Table 1), the mean scores of the three key variables are as follows; strategic human resource management is 28.8, intrapreneurship mindset and skills are 23, and organizational performance and growth is 32.78. The organizational performance and growth variable yielded the highest standard deviation score with a value of 4.59. Strategic human resource management and intrapreneurial mindset/skills variables yielded a standard deviation score of 2.04 and 3.97, respectively. Based on the standard deviation scores yielded, it can be concluded that the organizational growth and performance variable has a high data spread relative to the other two key variables.

**Table 1. Summary Statistics**

	Strategic HRM (V1)	Intrapreneurial Mindset/Skills (V2)	Organizational Performance and Growth (V3)
Min	22	14	18
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	28	21	30
Median	29	24	33
Mean	28.8	23	32.78
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	30	27	36
Maximum	34	34	45
Standard Deviation	2.04	3.97	4.59
Variance	4.18	15.79	21.13

Correlation between the key variables was tested to read correlation coefficients. However, a positive strong correlation between the independent variables is not a good indication based on the statistical procedure chosen to use- linear regression. The following figure is an illustration of the correlation yielded;

**Figure 1. Correlation Pair Plots**

Based on the pair plots generated as depicted in the above figure (see Figure 1), the correlation coefficients yielded were as follows; the correlation between organizational performance/growth and

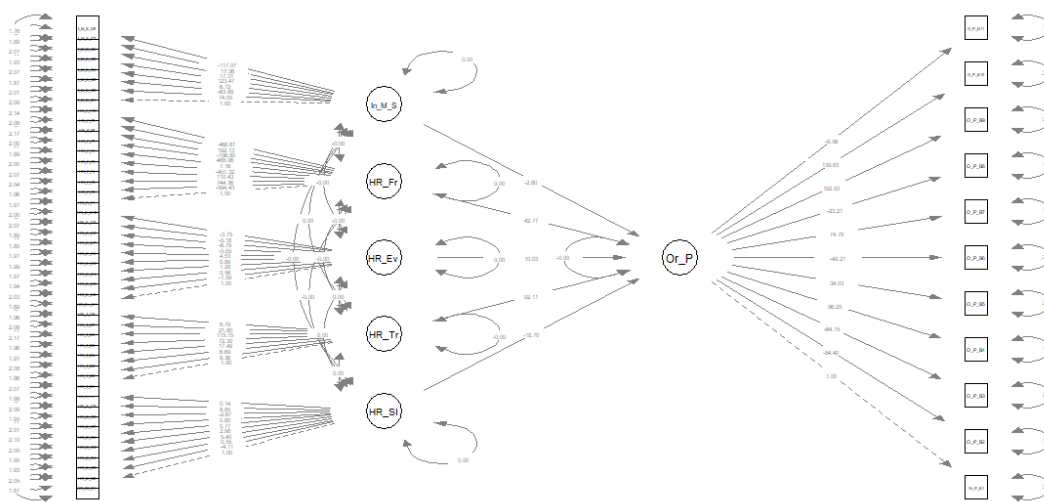


strategic HRM yielded  $r = -.047$ , organizational performance/growth and intrapreneurial mindset/skills yielded  $r = .079$ , and strategic HRM and intrapreneurial mindset/skills yielded  $r = -.029$ . Overall, the correlation coefficients yielded between variables do not establish a strong linear relation. Path relationship among the variables was tested using structural equation modeling. One latent variable (organizational performance and growth) and two observed variables (strategic human resource management and intrapreneurial mindset and skills) with their related loads were tested in the model. Based on more than 4850 iterations with 322 observations, with GIF score of 0.98 and RMSEA score of 0.02, the following regression coefficients were yielded regressed on the predictor variables (strategic human resource management and intrapreneurial mindset and skills).

**Table 2. Regression Coefficients Generated from SEM**

Strategic HRM	Selection	0.18
	Training	0.92
	Evaluation	0.10
	Fringe Benefits	0.42
Intrapreneurial Mind/Skills		0.20

The following figure (Figure 2) illustrates the above-tabulated regression coefficients generated based on the structural equation model used to analyze the path relationship between latent and observed variables related to the phenomenon under investigation.



**Figure 2. Path Relationship (SEM)**

Based on the above figure, it is apparent that latent variables, such as intrapreneurial mindset, intrapreneurial skills of employees, employee selection, employee training, employee evaluation, employee fringe benefits, are elements in the strategic human resources management process that directly affect organizational performance and growth in indigenous business organizations in Sri Lanka. As per the preceding sections, three linear regression models have been developed in support of testing hypotheses formulated. Model 01 is developed to test hypothesis one; organizational performance and growth as a function of strategic human resource management, model 02 is developed to test hypothesis two; intrapreneurial mindset and skills as a function of strategic human resource management, and model 03 is to test hypothesis three; organizational performance and growth as a function of strategic human resource management and intrapreneurial mindset and skills. The following table illustrates results yielded via the hypotheses test.

**Table 3. Hypotheses Test Results**

Model	Intercept/variable	Estimate	Std. Err	t value	p-value	R-Sqd
Model 01 (H <sub>1</sub> )	(Intercept)	35.8076	3.6272	9.872	<2e-16 ***	0.8922
	SHRM	15.1052	0.1256	-0.838	0.0032	
Model 02 (H <sub>2</sub> )	(Intercept)	25.5187	3.13772	8.133	9.33e-15 ***	0.8377
	SHRM	12.0563	0.10866	-0.518	0.0011	
Model 03 (H <sub>3</sub> )	(Intercept)	33.5170	3.97867	8.424	1.26e-15 ***	0.8205
	SHRM	8.1002	0.12548	-0.798	0.0007	
	Intrapreneurial Mindset & Skill	37.0898	0.06453	-0.391	0.0004	

Based on the coefficients yielded and as depicted in the above table, model 01 coefficients suggest that one unit of investment in SHRM will positively impact the organizational performance and growth by 15 units. Model 02 coefficients suggest that one unit of investment in SHRM will positively impact the intrapreneurial mindset and skills by 12 units. Model 03 coefficients suggest that the mediation of intrapreneurial mindset and skills of employees will have a positive impact on organizational performance and growth by 37 units. Based on the above premise, all three hypotheses tested in this study are accepted with statistical significance at 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The R-squared scores yielded indicate strong evidence to establish the statistically significant power of strategic HRM

activities (independent variable) and the intrapreneurial mindset and skills of the employees in Sri Lankan indigenous business organizations (mediating variable) in explaining the variation of the organizational performance and growth.

#### 4. Discussion

The emergence of internationalization of organizations due to technological advancements has afforded many organizations the opportunity to expand their businesses beyond local geographical boundaries. Amid the above emerging opportunity, business organizations operating in Sri Lanka have started a similar trend. Nevertheless, going international as an organizational strategy entails a certain degree of risk. Hence, the responsibility lies in the hands of organizations to prepare their employees to take risks, especially when organizations create new ventures locally and internationally. Intrapreneurship is a recently introduced notion in professional and academic rhetoric. Altinay (2005) theorizes that intrapreneurs possess similar attributes to entrepreneurs. However, the unique distinction between an intrapreneur and an entrepreneur is the mindset to create a win-win situation for both the organization and the employee. Based on the above premise, Altinay (2005) contends that given the degree of variability existing in the business environment, and the associated risk, the timely requirement is intrapreneurs over entrepreneurs. Therefore, organizations operating in today's business context should be well-equipped with a human resource strategy to recruit, select, place, procure, promote, and sustain intrapreneurs, who risk creating a win-win situation for organizations. Hence, nurturing a strategic organizational culture that enhances the intrapreneurial skills of the employees in preparing internal staff to lead new ventures of indigenous business organizations operating in Sri Lanka is of paramount importance. As a result, organizations can expect strategic human resource management activities in indigenous Sri Lankan organizations to influence organizational performance and intrapreneurial skills and mindset. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the intrapreneurial mindset and skills of the employees with the appropriate human resource strategy, causes organizations to perform relatively high and grow faster. Strategic human resources management is a process that manages various stages, such as recruitment, selection, placement, training, development, procurement, and retirement planning, in developing organizational human stock needed to develop and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Drucker, 1993; Dessler, 1999). These perceptions have played a pivotal role in establishing the current body of literature in academia. Surprisingly, this paper found no theory grounded in providing insights into the underpinnings between strategic human resources management activities, intrapreneurial mindset and skills, and organizational performance and growth. Further, our study findings validate that HR selection, employee training, employee performance evaluation, and employee fringe benefits positively impact organizational performance and growth (Griffith et al., 2019). Overall, strategic human resource management activities in local Sri Lankan businesses positively influence organizational performance and growth on par with a multinational organization, especially when embarking on future international ventures (Stroea et al., 2019). Further,

our study establishes consistency with the theory grounded by Gomez-Mejia et al. (2008) that argues that strategic human resource management activities and organizational performance and growth are highly correlated with the performance of intrapreneurs of organizations, especially when organizations create new ventures for organizational growth. While this study comes with positive practical and academic implications, it also entails a fundamental limitation; a limited number of elements are selected to investigate from the overall strategic human resource management activities. These limited elements were employee selection, employee training, employee performance evaluation, and employee fringe benefits. Hence, we propose a broader scope of human resource elements to investigate the complete phenomenon including other related elements, such as recruitment, procurement, and retirement. Hence, a robust research plan for future studies will minimize the limitation discussed above.

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