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The Role of HRM Practices on Employee Performance, Engagement and Retention: A Case Study on Public-Oriented Tourism Start-ups

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Abstract

Retaining employees is one of the challenges for start-ups, and employee engagement affects employee retention. The purpose of this study is to identify critical HRM practices of public-oriented start-ups in employee engagement that improve employee retention. The authors used a qualitative research method with the case study strategy. The research participants consisted of 5 managers and entrepreneurs from a start-up who were selected by non-probability purposive sampling. The data was obtained through interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The result of using theme analysis method identified seven themes consisted of recruitment and selection practices in employee engagement, training and development practices in employee engagement, performance appraisal practices in employee engagement, compensation and reward practices in employee engagement, role description practices in employee engagement, working conditions practices in employee engagement, and employee relations practices in employee engagement. Because exploratory studies in the field of human resources in public-oriented start-ups are few and limited, therefore, this research is considered as a new work in terms of the application of case studies in public-oriented start-ups in the field of human resources and one of its distinctive results is that Employee engagement and studies in the field of start-ups can be very different from traditional businesses. The results highlight the importance of HRM practices in employee engagement, which improves employee retention in public-oriented start-ups.

Keywords. Performance, Human Resource Management, Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Public Oriented Tourism Start-ups.

Introduction

In today's world where most human needs are intertwined with technology and the Internet, Start-ups play a unique role compared to other businesses, and the ease of establishing a start-up leads to an increase in the number of entrepreneurs who test their ability to create their businesses (Dana et al., 2005; Cockayne, 2019). However, starting a business is more accessible than managing it, especially when a fledgling Start-up founder with no prior management experience is responsible for a group (Gering and, Conner, 2002). Employee retention in start-ups is critical to business success, not only to reduce the cost of recruitment but also to increase business value in the market (Nithila & Anjali, 2018). The ability of a start-up to retain employees is often dependent on the entrepreneur's work to engage and manage employees (Dana et al., 2001; Kennedy and Daim, 2010). 100 % retention of the employees means that if the organisation is continuously growing, no new employee will enter the organisation with new ideas and points of view without the need to reduce labour, which impedes the creation process (Choi, Sung, and Park, 2020). Also, it is of little use to consider the average employee retention rate when formulating a strategy to combat high quit rates, as the retention rate fluctuates widely between positions, even within a company (Valzania, 2017). This creates a complex dimension due to the conflict between the potential role and the multiple individual roles in start-ups, particularly for those related to the public sector.

The role of human resources importance is undeniable in organisations and neglecting this can lead to many problems for organisations. This is why organisations need to retain human resources, and what matters in a business is not only employment but also employee retention (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). Start-ups have become an essential topic in the last thirty years and have played a significant role in the growth of the global economy and the creation of social values. While appearing as small businesses, these businesses create jobs, innovation, and competition (Nascimento, 2017; Sadeghi and Biancone 2018; Sukumar et al. 2020). For public-oriented start-ups, keeping good employees is one of the biggest challenges they face (Lee et al., 2017; Athamneh et al., 2018). This is due to the uncertain organisational climate of public-oriented start-ups that have undergone significant changes during their early years (Shah et al., 2017; Mokhtarzadeh et al, 2018; Jafari Sadeghi, Kimiagari and Biancone 2019). The inherent uncertainty of the corporate growth environment, when a company goes on a line that does not know if it will survive, it results in a level of systematic flexibility concerning internal operations that require high adaptability (Van de Ven et al., 2013; Mahmoudi et al, 2019). While this flexibility allows for the creation of a suitable point for optimal use of resources, it can also lead to confusion, stress, resignation, and lack of motivation (Banerjee, 2017). If these emotions are not continually investigated, they may lead to a gradual decline in staff. Then employees look for a work environment that suits them, a phenomenon that eventually emerges as a low employee retention rate (Sadeghi, et al. 2019a; Degbey et al., 2020). The ability of an organisation to retain its employees is often evaluated by the efforts of a business to provide workplace support and increase employee engagement, which is determined by the number of incoming and outgoing employees (Araslı and Arıcı, 2019; Mahdiraji et al, 2019a; 2019b; Garousi Mokhtarzadeh et al 2020; Sadeghi, et al. 2019b). The ability

of a company to retain employees often relies on the work of start-up entrepreneurs to manage the workforce (Dana 2001; Kennedy & Daim, 2010).

Overall, employee retention research has become increasingly important due to the lack of skills and the need for mobility and highly competitive labour markets (Coetzee and Stoltz, 2015). To understand the forces that sustain business shape, it is important to understand that human resource management is a vital necessity and driving incentive in entrepreneurial organisations. When it comes to human resources for start-ups, it means designing and developing appropriate programs, procedures, and processes for managing human resources so that both short- and long-term needs are considered and try to be resolved. Today, the biggest challenge for public-oriented start-ups is to attract and retain the best talents. Human resources are critical to a start-up business, and most entrepreneurs usually ignore it. When public-oriented start-ups compete with large organisations for the best talent in the business industry, they need to look for ways to attract and retain employees more creatively (Joungtrakul et al., 2018). Human resource management practices can draw the best talent into a start-up business and keep them in the best possible way. Start-ups are renowned for their high erosion rates, and the HR department has a difficult task of attracting, hiring, specialising, and maintaining employees. Therefore, human resource management failures are a challenge for public-oriented start-ups. Despite the importance of human resource management in need to engage employees, due to the limitations and lack of attitude based on human resource management in public-oriented start-ups of the tourism industry, this area is not given enough attention both at the national and global levels. In today's competitive environment, all global businesses are focused on attracting and retaining the most qualified human resources, and human resource management can create value for organisations.

Since the role of human resource management in engaging employees in public-oriented start-ups is a new topic and a few studies have been conducted in this field, Therefore, from the theoretical point of view, the importance of this research is to spread knowledge about employee engagement in public-oriented start-ups of the tourism industry (Chauhan and Madden, 2020). Furthermore, the importance of research from a practical perspective is to utilise the results of this research in implementing HRM practices that increase employee engagement and improve employee retention in public-oriented start-ups of the tourism industry. Since HRM practices influence employee retention, high staff retention rates are measured by employee engagement (Gering and Conner, 2002; Jafari-Sadeghi 2020; Taghavifard et al, 2018; Mokhtarzadeh et al 2020; Sadeghi and Biancone 2017). The present qualitative research aimed to identify the role of critical HRM practices of a start-up business on employee engagement which improves employee retention and to achieve this purpose the important question the research tried to answer was that what are the critical HRM practices of a successful start-up in employee engagement and retention and how do they affect employee engagement and retention?

Therefore, the main objectives of the present study were to:

a) Identify critical HRM practices of a successful start-up in employee engagement and retention

b) Identify how critical HRM practices of a successful start-up affect employee engagement and retention.

c) Provide insight into the impact of HRM practices of start-up founders on employee engagement and retention

Theoretical foundations

Entrepreneurs and human resource management practices in public-oriented start-ups

Every human resource expert and researcher has assumed several human resource management practices. In the present study, human resource management practices are selected based on the main areas of human resource management defined by Hornsby et al. (2002). These practices should be applied by start-up entrepreneurs in organisations and include job design, role descriptions, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, incentive strategies, working conditions, employee relationships. If jobs are adequately designed, they can give employees more significant differentiation and a sense of responsibility and introduce more complex tasks that increase the understanding of the challenge and provide employees with an insight into how their performance impacts important feedback outcomes (Nascimento, 2017). When entrepreneurs present employees with rational and transparent tasks and goals, they feel more active and seen (Cheng, Wong & Cui, 2019). Functions that have been seen as successful and rewarded with what they consider appropriate (Amberg & McGaughey, 2016). Job characteristics play an essential role in engaging on a personal level (Coetze and Stoltz 2015). Organisational justice and conversations are two critical components of employee relations. (Croponanzano et al., 2001).

Saks & Gruman (2014) stated that education helps to develop a sense of belonging. The training program will also increase employee's confidence in their performance at work because it has been found that staff uncertainty about their abilities has been significantly reduced engagement. Running the right development plans can help the company improve its internal cohesion and sense of belonging among employees. Besides, development programs help to create a feeling in employees that their abilities and efforts are taken into account and that the management team invests in their potential (Nascimento, 2017). Working conditions depend on physical and psychological components. Physical components include work organisation and work environment, and psychological components include employee communication, emotional needs, workload, work-life balance, and conflict of values (Cox et al., 2008). To grow their business, start-up entrepreneurs need to create conditions so that employees can feel comfortable both physically and emotionally in the organisation, as this will allow the start-up to Make progress faster and reach its desired purposes and eventually be successful (Claire et al., 2019). if working conditions in a start-up business are different from other public-oriented start-ups where employees have work experience, this may create a sense of disengagement. Recruiting the right

number of people with the necessary qualifications, experience, and knowledge to be able to perform the proper functions at the right time and the correct cost is one of the key strategies used to achieve a coordinated workforce (Anderson et al., 2004; Kalim and Arshad, 2018; Rezaei et al. 2020).

In such an environment, the value of employees is higher because they do not always have to correct other employees' mistakes because they work in an atmosphere of skilled and competent people (Wright and Gardner, 2003). A Reward is a covert, explicit, financial, and non-financial payments to employees, and the way the organisation tries to direct their attitude and behaviour (e.g., Harsasi et al., 2019; Dhiraj et al., 2020). In other words, the reward strategy is to optimally utilise the payment system as a critical integrating mechanism through which the efforts of employees and organisational units are directed towards the achievement of strategic purposes. Employees perceive compensation as the result of their hard work, while entrepreneurs attribute it to their ability to return on investment or the training and expertise of their specialists (Henrekson and Stenkula, 2017; Sadraei et al. 2018). The compensation and reward system can play an essential role in providing an organisation with a competitive advantage (Bloom et al., 2002). Balakrishnan et al. (2013) show that employee retention can be achieved by increasing the level of employee engagement and focus on a few non-financial stimuli. The practical implication of this study is that retention can be improved without spending money when there are economic constraints. Although performance evaluation is one of the most challenging aspects of management (and especially human resource management), at the same time, the science of management believes that if we cannot measure, we cannot control. If we cannot control, we cannot manage. Success or failure in performance management depends on the philosophy of the organisation and the attitude, skill, acceptance, and commitment of those who are responsible for evaluating performance (Lawler, 1994). Research has shown that employees need more feedback from entrepreneurs, as such relationships must exist to increase engagement (Alegre et al., 2016).

Employee engagement and retention in public-oriented start-ups and their challenges

Start-ups are growing businesses that are first set up and run by entrepreneurs. They try to provide a product or service that has not yet been delivered (Dabic et al., 2011). Attempting to produce something innovative makes a Start-up face some challenges such as uncertainty in the future, dealing with competitors in the market, high friction rates, and high wages offered by competitors. Also, public-oriented start-ups are struggling to get a promotion. For their human resources, it is also a struggle to find, hire, and retain the best talent (Kim, Kim, and Jeon, 2018). When a talented employee leaves the company and joins his rival, he brings not only the expertise but also the ideas that were intended for the success of the company. Employees are an essential resource in any organisation, and they are too difficult to manage. They are recognised as the critical assets of the organisation. The diversity of human nature and their globalisation importance in organisations has prompted many researchers to focus on human resources with different approaches. Start-ups are new-generation organisations and should look at them from a completely different perspective. What works for other companies may not work for public-oriented start-ups. Employee

engagement is thought to be an essential aspect of the workplace because it affects a company's performance (Moberly, 2014; Alexey et al., 2019). It is believed that any work-related progress is the result of engagement. Entrepreneurs can expect more when they can provide their employees with what they want. Generally, when they find out that employees are not excited about their work and only perform their duties during work hours, they face a common problem. Monetary action not only impedes productivity but also wastes time and resources. This problem should be considered because it may lead to erosion. Employees should, therefore, be engaged in ways to enjoy their work and motivate them to work beyond themselves. Start-ups that struggle to raise funds are also facing erosion because their employees have a better offer elsewhere. Employee retention is a practice taken by entrepreneurs to prevent talented employees from leaving (Fox, 2012). If a start-up fails to take appropriate practice for employee engagement, it can lead to a significant downturn at any stage.

Employee retention is a multidimensional phenomenon, and understanding the factors that influence it, requires studying internal and external factors in the organisation, such as individual values, personalities, expectations, and opportunities (Belias and Koustelios 2014). Also, it is affected by the quality of the relationship between employees and businesses (Shah et al., 2017). It is reasonable to believe that employees leave organisations for a variety of reasons (some personal, some professional). However, there are many challenges when measuring and studying employee engagement and incentives behind high employee leave rates; there is no firm agreement on employee engagement. Although many tools have been developed to measure employee engagement, none of them is complete or without error (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Employee engagement is difficult to measure, and so it is difficult to predict (Taris et al., 2017). However, the depth of this problem is far more profound than the difficulty of predicting employee separation: HR training must be continually developed (Bilevičienė et al., 2015).

One thing to understand about employee retention and efforts to increase employee engagement is that this is an exchange issue. In essence, employees give the business what they feel is the answer to what the company is giving them (Shah et al., 2017). Uncertainty is typical for public-oriented start-ups and requires adaptive and conditional leadership (Van de Ven et al., 2013). Therefore, there are specific practices and protocols that entrepreneurs, in their role as managers, need to be able to maintain to inspire their employees (Sandhya and Kumar, 2011).

Literature review

Florén, Rundquist, and Fischer (2016) conducted a study entitled Entrepreneurship Orientation and Human Resource Management: The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices. This study aimed to identify the relationship between HRM practices and corporate entrepreneurship orientation. The results of this study showed that human resource management practices play an essential role in formulating and implementing the organisation's strategies and designing specific HR practices can improve the level of entrepreneurship of organisations. Therefore, HR practices can help entrepreneurs to build a thriving organisation. Vijaya Kumara and Prof (2019), conducted

a study entitled employee engagement and relationships in public-oriented start-ups. To stay competitive in today's changing world, the presence of the best talent represents the success or failure of an organisation. Not only hiring people but also managing and retaining them, as Kennedy and Daim, 2010 said, is very important. India initially regarded as a provider of cheap labour, saw a slowdown in product development and innovation. With the introduction of new government initiatives, investments of around $ 3.5 billion to $ 5 billion in 2015 were intended to create jobs in the Indian market. Recruitment and retention of skilled staff due to the uncertain organisational climate in such businesses has been a significant challenge for public-oriented start-ups to succeed (Lee, Hom, and Li, 2017).

The inherent uncertainty in organisational growth has resulted in a level of systematic flexibility in internal operations that necessitates conditional leadership. While flexibility allows optimal use of resources, it can also lead to feelings of resignation, stress, and lack of motivation (Banerjee, 2017; Hajiagha et al, 2013; 2015; 2018; Jafari-Sadeghi et al. 2020b). If these issues are left unanswered, employees will quit and move on to better opportunities. This study focuses on human resource management practices (e.g., employee engagement and retention) in public-oriented start-ups, performance effectiveness (employee satisfaction), and the challenges that public-oriented start-ups face in a competitive environment. Kunampurat and Vincent, (2018), conducted a study entitled Employee Motivation and Satisfaction: Issues and Challenges in Start-ups. Retaining qualified employees in an active and rigorous environment for all businesses, especially for public-oriented start-ups, is a severe challenge. While public-oriented start-ups are struggling to market new products or services, there are many challenges for entrepreneurs, such as problems with competitiveness, uncertainty about the future of the product, illegal revenues, and changes in tax policies, and legal frameworks, higher payrolls by competitors.

All of these make it challenging to keep employees in public-oriented start-ups. Therefore, proper motivational strategies are essential for employee retention. Paying attention to the issue of leaving employees in public-oriented start-ups is crucial and requires managers and entrepreneurs to motivate, retain, and enhance their performance. Empowered employees are one of the essential resources of organisations, and organisations need efficient employees to achieve their purposes. Although entrepreneurs may not always be able to prevent their valuable employees from leaving their jobs, effective decision-making policies and practices can significantly reduce the occurrence of this situation. One of the essential tasks of human resource management is staff retention because it is a complement to other human resource management practices and processes; Even if the recruitment, selection, appointment, and refinement operations are appropriately conducted, without sufficient retention, the results of the entrepreneurial actions will not be significant. With the advancement of technology and the creation of competition between organisations, employees are facing many job opportunities. These job opportunities make it hard for organisations to retain employees. Since various factors affect employee retention, human resource management practices can also affect employee retention. Many studies have focused on the importance of employee retention and factors affecting employee retention.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify critical HRM practices of public-oriented start-ups in the tourism industry in employee engagement that improves employee retention. To achieve the research purpose the important question to answer was that what are the critical HRM practices of a successful start-up of the tourism industry in employee engagement and retention and how do they affect employee engagement and retention? The method of the present study was qualitative and used a case study strategy. The case study is defined as an in-depth, multilateral exploration of a system with a clear boundary and is suitable for research on background factors in areas that have been less studied (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Therefore, the reason for using a case study in this present study is the new topic of human resource management in the engagement of start-up employees of the tourism industry, and the lack of studies conducted in this field, and another reason for using a case study is to gain a deep understanding of the real world. Because the researcher finds experimental data, interprets and analyses it, and finally shows the results to describe and discover the reality (Pearce et al, 2014; Groenland and Dana 2019).

Procedure

Since the focus of this study was to gain an understanding of entrepreneurs on HRM practices in engaging and retaining start-up employees, the study participants consisted of entrepreneurs and managers of public-oriented start-ups. To answer the research question, the researcher looked for a start-up that has been successful in engaging employees in the tourism industry (Patton, 2002; Beheshti et al, 2016). The start-up was obtained through an Internet search using keywords such as public-oriented start-ups and human resource management practices in employee engagement of the tourism industry. From the search results and according to the opinions of professionals, one of the emerging businesses was suitable for answering the research questions.

Figure 1 shows the procedure of the research.

Please insert Figure 1 Here

Participants

The company participating in this research, as a system of the tourism industry and intelligent transportation, has been operating since 2016. Since its inception, the company has employed more than 1,000 employees as agents, and now has an average of hundreds of ambassadors per day on the system, online and in service. The company's services are such that both ordinary people and large companies and sites can easily register their booking and see the process of doing it instantly. The company's application is one of the most useful applications in the field of tourism services in Iran. The participants in this study were selected based on criteria such as:

1. The participants of the research should have been in a position to provide the most accurate and complete information to deeply analyse the data to examine the perspectives of managers and entrepreneurs of a start-up.
2. The participants of the research should have had at least a master's degree.
3. The participants of the research should have had worked in managerial positions.

Based on the above, in the present study, data were collected from 5 managers and entrepreneurs of tourism industry start-up. The time-domain of this research is related to the actions of the last two years of human resource management in the Case study, and the study participants included four men and one woman, all of whom are managers and entrepreneurs of the start-up.

Data collection

In this research, interviews were used to collect data. Interviews may be structured, unstructured, or semi-structured. As recommended by Groenland and Dana (2019), structured interviews provide limited deviations from the prepared and highly focused interview guide. Semi-structured interviews were used in this research for data gathering. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews in the present study was to allow the researcher to understand the views and perspectives of managers and entrepreneurs of the start-up. Semi-structured interviews will enable the researcher to focus on the topic of research and allow "flexibility in the questions asked, the amount of searching and the order of the question" for depth research (Rowley, 2012). Reasons for using Semi-structured interviews for this study were:

1. The interviews were conducted for a short time (the interviews lasted for one hour for each participant).
2. The interviews were conducted in a one-step in-person form with anonymous questions that followed a series of predetermined questions.

The interview protocol was set up to prevent any errors in the research process. Some of the actions taken are:

1. In the present study, the results of the research were returned to the interviewees and experts, and also the research process was written down, which all promoted the validity of the research.
2. Requesting feedback on the results of the study from the participants denied the possibility of misinterpreting the interview.
3. To reduce bias, the researcher followed the interview protocol using similar interview methods and questions for each participant.
4. The researcher re-read, re-categorised, and re-analysed the text to ensure that nothing was lost.

Data analysis

Finally, qualitative data analysis was done manually using the theme analysis method. According to Braun and Clark (2006) and Groenland and Dana (2019), the process of total analysis begins when the analyst considers patterns of meaning and themes that are potentially attractive. This analysis involves a continuous turn-around between data sets and encoded summaries, and the data analysis that emerges. Theme analysis in this study consisted of 6 main steps:

1. Familiarity with data. For the researcher to become familiar with the content depth of the data, it is necessary to re-read it frequently. This means searching for meanings and patterns,

2. Creation of initial code. The second step begins when the researcher has read the data and become familiar with it. This step involves creating initial data codes. The codes introduce a data feature that looks interesting to the analyst. Coded data differs from themes,

3. Search for themes. This step involves categorising various codes into potential themes and sorting out all the data encoded summaries in the specified themes. In fact, the researcher begins by analysing the codes and considers how various codes can be combined to create a general theme,

4. Review of themes. The fourth stage begins when the researcher creates a set of themes and reviews them. This stage includes two parts of theme review. The first part involves reviewing the level of encoded summaries. In the second part, the validity of the themes in relation to the data set is considered,

5. Definition, and naming of themes. At this stage, the researcher defines and revises the themes that have been presented for analysis, then analyses the data within these themes. By defining and reviewing, the nature of what a theme is discussing is determined by the nature of the data.

6. Report preparation. The sixth stage begins when the researcher has a set of well-formed themes. This step involves final analysis and reports writing.

Results

In the qualitative analysis, first, the audio transcripts of the interviews were put on paper, and their transcription and precision were performed. Then the transcripts of the interviews were repeatedly read by the researcher to ensure full familiarity with the text, and the least error occurred during coding. After knowing the documents, the coding process began by reading the documents and comparing them with different sections of the interview. It was attempted to identify parts containing meaningful information relevant to the research questions. The researcher obtained 46 concepts through interviews. Some of which include: Providing relevant scientific and practical training to staff, Evaluation of staff performance by the manager, Align Performance Assessment with Organisational Strategic Goals, Managers and entrepreneurs support employees and Paying attention to them, Evaluate staff performance periodically, Evaluation of staff performance by the manager, Align Performance Assessment with Organisational Strategic Goals, Evaluate staff

performance periodically, Paying salaries to employees, Establish bright goals and vision in the organisation, creating a suitable work environment for employees, Employee turnout being high, Staff willingness to leave the company at the earliest opportunity, Paying salaries to employees, Evaluate staff performance periodically, Evaluation of staff performance by the manager, etc.

After completing the coding, the statements were repeatedly studied and compared to make the most similar code that could be semantically combined into a single meaning. These categories were devoted to so-called themes. Finally, all the codes were placed in the class and created the themes from the data separately, as shown in Table 1.

Please insert Table 1 Here

From theme analysis of data from interviews with research participants on critical HRM practices to engage employees of the Case study start-up, seven themes of recruitment and selection practices in employee engagement, training and development practices in employee engagement, performance evaluation practices in employee engagement, compensation and reward practices in employee engagement, role describing practices in employee engagement, working situation practices in employee engagement, and employee relations practices in employee engagement were identified, which are described below in the narratives of the participants.

Theme 1. Recruitment and selection practices in employee engagement

Research participants cited recruitment and selection of staff based on competencies on recruitment and selection practices that influence staff engagement in the emerging business. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P4 stated: "The recruitment of employees in our company is based on the merits of individuals, which leads to employee engagement."
- P1 also acknowledged that "lack of meritocracy in the company leads to a lack of engagement of employees."

Theme 2. Training and development practices in employee engagement

Relevant scientific and applied training to staff, periodic training to staff, on-the-job training to staff development, and staff development to provide staff promotion and staffing responsibilities are some of the issues mentioned by participants. Here is the narration of the themes.

- Concerning staff training, P1 stated: "In our company, the relevant scientific and practical training is conducted on a 3-month-long basis for various units to engage employees."
- P2 stated: "Our Company has two weeks of training and testing to enter the call centre. It also offers a monthly training course that engages employees."
- P3 stated: "In our company, effective and applied training is provided every three months according to the needs of the organisation, which engages employees."

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- P4 stated: "In our company, both general and specialised training courses are tailored to each individual's needs depending on the time required for these pieces of training, which contribute to the commitment of employees to the company."
- P5 stated: "In our company, there are long-term training courses that affect the sense of commitment and commitment of employees and their commitment."
- Concerning the development of P4 staff, "In our company, it is a way of engaging employees through job promotion and increasing employee responsibility."
- P5 stated: "In our company, there is a promotion that affects the sense of commitment and commitment of employees and their commitment."

Theme 3. Performance appraisal practices in employee engagement

Research participants on performance appraisal practices that influence employee engagement in the emerging business have referred to employee performance appraisal by the manager, alignment of performance appraisal with strategic goals of the organisation, and periodic evaluation of employee performance. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P1 stated: "Employee feedback is measured by the manager of each department and the metrics that determine the manager according to the overall strategy of the company goals, and results in staff engagement every three months."
- P2 states: "In our company, performance appraisals are conducted monthly under the supervision of the manager, which leads to employee engagement."
- P3 stated: "In our company, performance appraisals are conducted by managers or supervisors at a grade of 3 degrees, which results in staff commitment."
- P4 stated: "In our company, we evaluate performance in the contract renewal cycle and at the end of the year by submitting forms to the managers and supervisors of the individual, past performance of the individual under review and with a past-based approach we decide to cooperate with or terminate the partnership. Six months of performance evaluation of individuals. Performance evaluation measures have an impact on employee commitment."
- P5 states: "The performance of the co-workers is assessed every six months by the HR manager, which is effective in recruiting staff."

Theme 4. Compensation and reward practices in employee engagement

Research participants noted compensation and remuneration practices that affect employees' commitment to the start-up business to pay employees, reward employees, increase employee salaries, and provide employees with amenities and gifts. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P1 stated: "Employees are not obliged to pay unjust and irregular payrolls. There is also no reward in our company for not having employees."
- P2 stated: "In our company, there is a high turnover rate and employees leave the company at the earliest opportunity for financial reasons due to unfair pay."

- P3 stated: "The reason for the employees' failure to pay is irregular pay and benefits and lack of financial rewards for employees."
- P4 said: "The current adverse economic situation has had a direct impact on businesses and the most basic need for staff to pay their salaries on a timely and regular basis has been eliminated. There is no financial reward for employees. "
- P5 states: "To increase the engagement and retention of human capital, such as facilities and welfare services/birthday gift/marriage gift/spouse birthday gift / religious holiday card/gift card/gift card for Ramadan/assistance the cost of Nowruz/kindergarten allowance, Also, the reasons for the lack of engagement can be the lack of peer satisfaction with the rights and benefits."

Theme 5. Role describing practices in employee engagement

Research participants cited role description practices that influence employee engagement in the Case study start-up, setting clear goals and vision for the organisation, providing job descriptions to employees, and creating appropriate job opportunities for employees. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P1 stated: "The reason for the lack of engagement of employees is that clear goals and prospects in the organisation are not clearly defined for employees."
- P2 stated: "The reason for the lack of engagement of employees is the lack of detailed job descriptions for employees in the company."
- P5 stated: "One of the reasons for not being able to engage is the lack of job satisfaction of employees."

Theme 6. Working conditions practices in employee engagement

Research participants cited the creation of an appropriate work environment for employees, the creation of workplaces, the creation of job security for employees, in terms of workplace practices that affect staff engagement in the emerging business. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P1 stated: "The reason for the lack of engagement is the inappropriate workplace and the poisoning atmosphere and the formation of different groups within the company."
- P2 stated: "The reason for the lack of staff engagement is lack of order and planning in the affairs of the company and also job insecurity."
- P3 stated: "The reason for the lack of engagement of employees in the workspace is the lack of commitment. In our company, a sense of job security is created through a sense of economic satisfaction, dependence, and commitment to the organisation."

Theme 7. Employee relations practices in employee engagement

Research participants pointed out Employee Relationship practices that Affect Employee Engagement in ALOPEYS start-up. Some of them are: Managers and entrepreneurs support

employees and paying attention to them, Create Intimate Climate between Employees and Entrepreneurs, Create Fair Climate in Employee-Entrepreneur Relations, and the creation of cohesion and integration among employees. Here is the narration of the themes.

- P1 stated: "Employees do not want managers and entrepreneurs to ignore them. We do not feel valued and supported by entrepreneurs in the company. Corporate entrepreneurs accept different opinions if it is reasonable. Employees also participate in day-to-day and weekly meetings and participate and help each other."
- P2 stated: "Entrepreneurs of the company do not accept different opinions, in our company the integration of new employees is kept at the same level, which in my opinion is not the right thing to do, and it does not oblige employees because they keep the same level of salaries. "In our company, there is also collaborative management, the participation of representatives, and quality circles.
- P3 stated: "There is a fair and equitable relationship in our company. Entrepreneurs accept different opinions if their views are reasonable and non-biased. In our company, employee participation is through monthly meetings and daily and weekly meetings. Moreover, integrating new employees is by understanding the organisational culture that engages employees, and one of the reasons why employees are not engaged is factors such as the lack of visibility by managers and entrepreneurs. "
- P4 stated: "The relationships in our company are fair and equitable, and we accept different opinions if they are reasonable and unbiased. In our company, new employees are introduced to the corporate culture, and the reason for the lack of Employee engagement is a feeling of being overlooked by managers and entrepreneurs. "
- P5 said: "Human resource is a team between colleagues and senior executives and entrepreneurs. Naturally, it is challenging to work in an organisation to align partners with organisational standards and to satisfy colleagues and enhance their understanding of the fundamentals of the company. The value and the lack of support from both sides are felt by the entrepreneur-partner, in the integration of new employees through the introduction of a company booklet that introduces the organisational structure, the organisational chart, the introduction of the subsidiaries, the purpose, and the prospect of holding (acquaintance with Laws and Regulations of Labour Law) Welfare Issues and Introduction to Partners in the First Partner Process "That is what makes staff engaged."

Discussion

This research was conducted to achieve three main objectives. The first objective was to Identify critical HRM practices of a successful start-up in employee engagement and retention which were recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation and reward, role description, working conditions, and employee relations practices in employee engagement. Research participants stated that in the Case study start-up, practical and specialised training is provided based on the needs of staff at different times, and sometimes upon arrival and promoting jobs and increasing employee responsibility is a way of improving engagement. In this

regard, Saks & Gruman (2014) stated that training programs help to develop a sense of belonging. The training program will also increase employees' confidence in their performance at work, as it has been found that staff uncertainty about their abilities has been significantly reduced. Employees who are better trained and more experienced than entrepreneurs in public-oriented start-ups are generally more likely to adopt a specific set of operating procedures. In this regard, Döckel et al. (2006) found that training is one of the main factors affecting employee retention. Coetze and Stoltz (2015) argued that job opportunities were associated with long-term employee engagement, which in turn was directly related to employee retention. Career development, as described by Döckel et al. (2006), affects job security, increases long-term investment, and increases the opportunity to appreciate employee achievements that somehow meet expectations.

The second objective was to determine how critical HRM practices of a successful start-up affect employee engagement and retention. Participants acknowledged that in the start-up, performance appraisals are performed periodically by the manager of each department in a 360-degree manner consistent with the business's strategic goals. In this regard, Alegre et al. (2016) have shown that employees need more feedback from entrepreneurs, as such communication must exist to increase engagement. Research participants stated that there is no financial reward in the start-up of the tourism industry, and this is one of the reasons employees are not engaged. Also, the rights and benefits are not fair, and the payments are not regular and appropriate. Employees' dissatisfaction with salaries and benefits results in employees not being engaged and reasons for wanting to quit their jobs, which is why the rate of quitting in this business is high and usually after six months the business staff with better job offers, Leave. In this regard, Balakrishnan et al. (2013) show that employee retention can be achieved by increasing the level of employee engagement and focus on several non-financial stimuli. The practical implication of this study is that retention can be improved without spending money when there are economic constraints. Participants acknowledged that in the start-up of the tourism industry, one of the reasons for not engaging employees is that there are no clear goals and prospects in the organisation for employees, no detailed job descriptions, and no job satisfaction. In this regard, Coetze and Stoltz (2015) stated that job characteristics play an essential role in personal engagement. Tasks are challenging when the features of the job are unpleasant. Misconceptions about work can lead to employees being suddenly unaware of reality. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) also found that work-life balance and job characteristics strongly influence employee retention. Research participants stated that in the start-up, the sense of job security is created by creating a sense of economic satisfaction and a sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation. Employees' need for job security can be addressed in different ways, and through their understanding of job security. Khan (1990) identified security as one of the three conditions required for the development of individual engagement at work. In this regard, Döckel et al. (2006) also stated that business planning is one of the factors that increase employee engagement. If the working conditions differ from other public-oriented start-ups in which employees have work experience, this may create a sense of disengagement.

The third objective was to provide insight into the impact of HRM practices of start-up founders on employee engagement and retention. Research participants stated that in the start-up, one of the reasons for employee's failure engagement is the lack of value and lack of support from both employees and entrepreneurs. In this regard, Bilevičienė et al. (2017) stated that one of the main building blocks of human resource management is employee support that facilitates employee participation in an organisation (Belias and Koustelios, 2014). Coetzee and Stoltz (2015) also stated that organisational support for the employee creates a sense of business dependency and that the employee feels engaged with the business. Vijaya Kumara and Prof (2019) also argue that in public-oriented start-ups, organisational support creates a sense of belonging and engagement. Research participants stated that in the start-up, employee participation is made through participation in various meetings, participatory management, the participation of delegates and quality circles, and the views of employees are accepted if rational and unbiased. In this regard, Nadaraja et al. (2012) stated that employee participation is essential in decision making and employee retention, so organisations can create a competitive advantage by emphasising human resource management practices in terms of employee engagement and retention. Research participants point to the warm and friendly atmosphere in the start-up. In this regard, Chen et al. (2016) acknowledged that, at an advanced level of engagement, the business nurtures employees in a friendly and intimate environment, invest in their mental health, and such employees are less likely to leave. Research participants also referred to the integration of employees into the start-up to create a sense of belonging to employees by introducing business as a booklet and understanding organisational culture. In this regard, Deery and Shaw (1999) argue that integration is a critical component of employee engagement and is mostly influenced by business culture, arguing that the dynamics of small groups, such as public-oriented start-ups, directly impact engagement.

Theoretical Implications

In today's competitive environment, all global businesses focus on retaining the most desirable human resources, and human resource management can add value to organisations. Changes in the mindset of the workforce affect the rate of retention. Previously, financial wages were enough to work, today money alone is less and less effective in loyalty, and especially in public-oriented start-ups with low income in the early years. Other factors, such as employee relationships, partnerships, non-cash rewards, all of which stem from human resource management practices, are useful in employee engagement. Although employee engagement is a critical element in ensuring employee retention, start-up businesses' efforts to communicate and inspire these emotions in employees are often inadequate, leading to employees leaving to find an emotionally better job. Therefore, awareness of the measures that affect employee engagement in a start-up business can be helpful to other public-oriented start-ups. Start-ups have an essential role to play in economic growth. They start small, but overgrow in local economies and shape the surrounding ecosystem. Not only individually but overall, it can be concluded that public-oriented start-ups of the tourism industry can represent the economic power of a country. The growth and success of public-oriented start-ups can further motivate the new generation to create new ideas and create public-oriented

start-ups. This effect should not be underestimated. Since there is no single way for public-oriented start-ups to succeed, it is in the interest of public-oriented start-ups to have a good understanding of the human resource management practices of a start-up and its impact on employee engagement.

Research participants identified recruiting based on competence as one of the practices of recruitment and selection of staff. They emphasised the importance of paying attention to the merits of recruitment and paying attention to meritocracy. They stated that the start-up employs and selects a team based on their values. In this regard, Nadaraja et al. (2012) showed in their research that HRM practices could play an essential role in encouraging employees to engage, and these methods can encourage them to stay in the workplace for a long time. In his research, Rusyandi (2015) showed that there was a significant, secure, and positive linear relationship between staff engagement and employee retention.

Managerial Implications

The results of the study showed that various factors affect employee engagement and there is no general agreement on what causes all employees to engage. Therefore, start-ups should identify the reasons for employees' disengagement according to the characteristics and personality and expectations of employees, and in order to strengthen it, take appropriate measures to improve human resource management. Because businesses can use human resource management as a practical tool to plan the necessary operational periods to improve specific aspects of employee commitment and have a better chance to retain employees. Employee engagement was affected by the quality of the relationship between employees and the business, and that employees' attitudes toward the relationship between employees and founders affected their sense of worth and decision to stay in business. Therefore, in addition to creating a friendly and intimate atmosphere, start-ups should use different methods to instil a sense of support and attention to employees and should also adopt appropriate methods to integrate employees. Lack of financial rewards and increased dissatisfaction of employees with unfair and irregular salaries and benefits that are not paid on time is another reason for the disengagement of employees. Therefore, to solve this problem, businesses need to identify the appropriate compensation ways and rewards that are required by employees and pay more attention to the aspects of paying salaries and fair benefits, as well as non-cash rewards to Increase staff engagement.

Research has shown that employee training and development programs improve their skills and abilities, enhance their sense of security, and increase employee engagement. Therefore, it is recommended that businesses offer different training courses according to the different training needs of employees, and keep in mind that human resource training should be continuously developed according to the dynamics of the business. The results also showed that the selection of employees based on their competencies increases the engagement of employees. Businesses need to pay attention to their skills, abilities and competencies in employee selection in different positions because employees always compare their job and performance level with other colleagues, and if they feel that the selections are not based on people's competencies, they begin

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to disengage and leave the business with better job offers. And finally, the supervision of employees' activities by managers and founders and the feedback they receive and the methods and timing of employee performance appraisal, lead to employee engagement. Therefore, businesses are advised to adopt performance appraisal methods in accordance with the goals and strategies of the business and to have specific performance appraisal periods in order to induce a sense of engagement to employees regarding the results of their performance.

Conclusion

The present qualitative research is conducted using a case study strategy to identify critical HRM practices of a start-up of the tourism industry to increase employee engagement that improves employee retention in public-oriented start-ups. Research participants acknowledged that hiring staff based on their competence plays a role in employee engagement. Concerning staff training and development practices, Research participants emphasised the importance of specialised. They applied training, in-service, and on-the-job training, as well as increasing staff responsibility and providing them with job promotion in the engagement of employees. Also, regarding the performance appraisal practices, the research participants emphasised the importance of periodic performance appraisal by the manager and coordination of performance appraisal with the company's strategic purposes. In terms of compensation and reward practices, the research participants emphasised the importance of paying salaries and financial rewards, providing facilities and gifts, and increasing wages in the engagement of employees. In role description practices, the research participants pointed to a detailed description of the tasks of the staff, the precise purposes and vision of the company, and the creation of a suitable job position in the engagement of the staff. Concerning the importance of working conditions practices, research participants emphasised the creation of an appropriate work environment for employees, planning for work, and job security in the engagement of employees.

Moreover, finally, about the importance of working relations, research participants pointed out the need for managers and entrepreneurs to care for employees and support them, the creation of a cordial atmosphere between employees and entrepreneurs, the creation of a moderate climate in employee-entrepreneur relationships, the participation of employees in making decisions and performing tasks pointed to the creation of cohesion and integration among employees in the engagement of employees. The conclusions show that employee engagement is one of the critical factors in the competitiveness of the organisation, and consequently, it is essential for business success. Engaged employees are committed to their roles and display their full potential (Saks & Gruman, 2014). One thing to understand about employee retention and efforts to increase employee engagement is that this is an exchange issue: employees give the business the answer they feel they deserve in the business (Shah et al., 2017). Therefore, this can be done by investing in engagement processes, which is one of the ways to retain employees effectively (Kennedy & Daim, 2010).

Limitations and future research

Since this research was conducted using a case study strategy, its results cannot be generalised to other researches. Therefore, it is suggested that future researches be conducted with other strategies. Also, since gender is a factor that affects the perception and behaviour of individuals to some extent, it is suggested that research be conducted to compare human resource management measures in the engagement of male and female employees.

Another limitation of this study was that only one start-up of the tourism industry was considered, so it is recommended that future research be conducted on more start-up businesses with a variety of areas of activity to compare results.

Since the present study was conducted with a qualitative approach and through interviews, In order to identify the level of human resource management practices from the perspective of employees and founders and to examine more details about the components of employee engagement, it is suggested to use the questionnaire and quantitative method along with the qualitative method.

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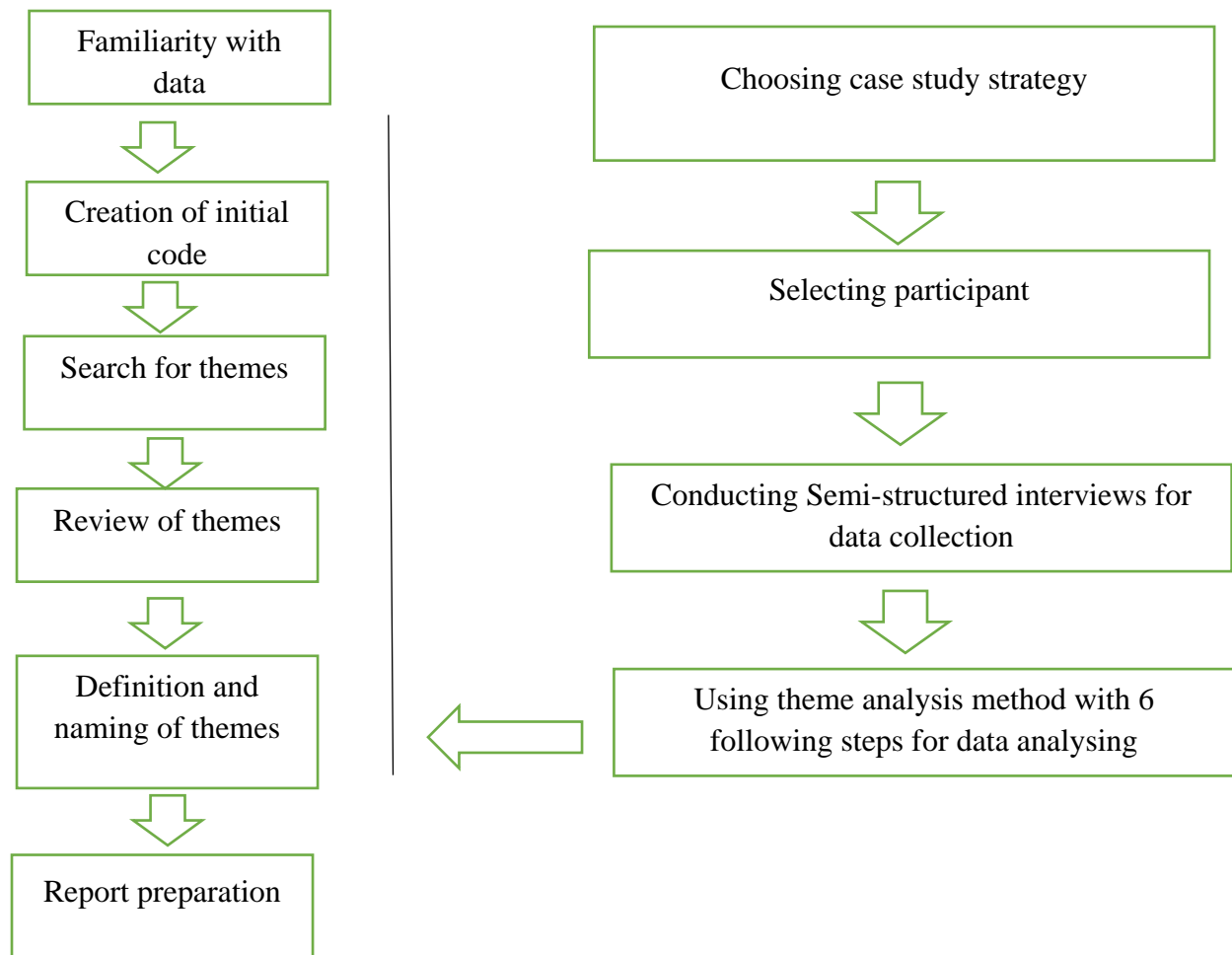
Familiarity with data		Choosing case study strategy
⬇		⬇
Creation of initial code		Selecting participant
⬇		⬇
Search for themes		Conducting Semi-structured interviews for data collection
⬇		⬇
Review of themes		
⬇		
Definition and naming of themes	⬅	Using theme analysis method with 6 following steps for data analysing
⬇		
Report preparation		

Figure 1. Research method procedure

Table1. Research themes

Concept	Theme
▪ Recruitment based on merit	recruitment and selection practices in employee engagement
▪ Providing relevant scientific and practical training to staff ▪ providing periodic training to staff ▪ Offering periodic training to staff ▪ Providing job promotion for staff ▪ Offer training to employees on arrival	training and development practices in employee engagement
▪ Evaluation of staff performance by manager ▪ Align Performance Assessment with Organisational Strategic Goals ▪ Evaluate staff performance periodically	performance appraisal practices in employee engagement
▪ Paying salaries to employees ▪ Pay rewards to employees ▪ Increasing staff salaries ▪ Providing staff welfare and gifts	compensation and reward practices in employee engagement
▪ Establish clear goals and vision in the organisation ▪ Provide job descriptions to employees ▪ Create the right job for the staff	role description practices in employee engagement
▪ Creating a suitable work environment for employees ▪ Create a plan to get things done ▪ Creating job security for employees	working conditions practices in employee engagement
▪ Managers and entrepreneurs support employees and Paying attention to them ▪ Create a friendly atmosphere between employees and entrepreneurs ▪ Creating cohesion and integration among employees ▪ Creating a fair atmosphere in the relationships between employees and entrepreneurs ▪ Employee participation in decision making and tasks	employee relations practices in employee engagement