

# The Mediating Role of Job Characteristic on The Relationship between Human Resource Practice, Employee Engagement, and Affective Organizational Commitment

Muhammad Baiquni

*Faculty of Economics and Business  
Universitas Indonesia  
Depok, Indonesia  
baiquni.8@gmail.com*

Ayu Aprilianti Lizar

*Faculty of Economics and Business  
Universitas Indonesia  
Depok, Indonesia  
ayuaprilianti@ui.ac.id*

**Abstract**—Organizational success in this 4.0 industrial revolution era depend less on advantages associated with economies of scale, but are derived more from committed human resources combined with the ability to leverage technology that the organization has. Accordingly, finding an effective strategy to increase employees' commitment as well as engagement plays a significant role in achieving organizational success. The purpose of this quantitative research is to investigate the relationship among human resource practice, job characteristics, employee engagement, and organizational commitment, and also testing the role of job characteristics as the mediator between human resources practice and organizational commitment as well as employee engagement. A total of 462 employees from 3 organizations in Jakarta have participated as the respondents of this study. Data were obtained through questionnaires and then analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results show that affective commitment and engagement is positively influenced by human resource practice and job characteristics. Additionally, job characteristic mediates the relationship between human resource practice, organizational commitment, and employee engagement.

**Index Terms**—human resource practice, job characteristic, employee engagement, organizational commitment

## I. INTRODUCTION

Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky illustrates that organizational commitment is strongly related to the performance of employees within the organization [1]. It is a strong magnetic force which binds employees with their willingness to remain attached in the organization. Committed employees usually perform their job well, willing to stay in the company for a long time, and have a higher concern with the organization's success and sustainability which finally can increase the overall performance and sustainability of the organization [1], [2]. Therefore, having committed employees is a strategic issue that every company needs to address, especially in this highly competitive and disruptive era.

In line with that, in the academic field, the discussion regarding organizational commitment, especially in the area of human resource management and organizational behavior has never been stopped. Extensive research about this topic

is continually performed in almost all parts of the world, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding about the antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment and how those variables interplay with one another [3].

Another topic that has also become a major concern in human resource management and organizational behavior is employee engagement. According to Saks, employee engagement is one of the factors that can influence employee commitment as well as performance [4]. Employee engagement is defined as a positive work-related condition characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption [5]. In dealing with today's business challenges, companies are often challenged with situations where operating under pressure to produce more products at less cost without discounting the value, become routine. Therefore, having employees who are bound by the values and goals of the company, and able to provide the maximum contribution to the company is extremely important [6]. Jafri in his research has proven that the more positive employees were towards their work, the higher their creativity to produce new ideas [7]. Therefore, employee engagement is also an important issue that a company should considered.

Academic research conducted at the organizational level suggested that the ways companies try to manage their human resource (human resource practice) are able to influence organizational outcomes by shaping employees' behavior and attitudes, including employees' commitment as well as engagement. More specifically, systems of "high commitment" human resource practice increase organizational outcomes by creating conditions where employees become more involved in the organization and work harder to accomplish organizational goals [8], [9]. High commitment human resource practice represents a high commitment strategy that includes sets of organization-wide human resource policies and procedures that affect employee commitment, motivation, and work behavior. These policies and procedures include selective staffing, developmental appraisal, competitive and equitable compensation, and comprehensive training and development

activities [10]–[12]. In addition to high commitment human resource practice, Delery and Doty proposed the concept of strategic human resource practice [13]. Strategic human resource practice relates all human resource activities to the company's strategy. According to Delery and Doty, there are seven practices that are consistently considered as strategic human resource practice [13]. Both commitment and strategic human resource practice can help a company to create a high-performance working system and improve organizational behavior like commitment, competency, and flexibility, which in turn leads to improved employees' performance [14]. Meyer and Smith in their research concluded that there is a relationship between human resource practices and organizational commitment, in which the relationship can occur mediated by certain factors [15]. Moreover, Saks also mentioned that the way an organization conducts human resource practices can influence employee engagement [4].

It has been mentioned previously that human resource practice can create a condition that promotes employee involvement, participation as well as development. This condition is aligned closely with the concept of a job characteristic model proposed by Hackman and Oldham [16]. Based on this model, there are five characteristics of jobs that can arouse a certain psychological state which in turn increase employee's motivation. Those characteristics include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. According to Hackman and Oldham, this job characteristic model can produce several outcomes such as internal motivation, job satisfaction, and higher performance [16]. This statement also correlated with research conducted by Diamantidis and Chatzoglou, which showed that human resource practice in conjunction with organizational planning that is implemented through human resource involvement will influence the job characteristics [17].

Despite plenty of research that has been conducted to investigate the relationship between human resource practice and job characteristics with outcomes such as organizational commitment, employee engagement, job satisfaction and other variables, there is still limited literature discussing the relationship between human resource practice, job characteristics, organizational commitment and employee engagement, with job characteristics as the mediator. This research was conducted to fill that gap, to test the model that shows the relationship among those variables with job characteristics as the mediating variable. This research was conducted in various organizations in Indonesia.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Affective Organizational Commitment*

Research about organizational commitment is conducted by many researchers, most widely known is the research by Mowday in 1979. Mowday, Steers, and Porter describe strength as coming from an individual identification with and their involvement in the organization as organizational commitment [18]. That research also develops the measurement for organizational commitment which is called OCQ. Then in

1996, Allen and Meyer develop questionnaires for organizational measurement [19]. For an organization, increasing or maintaining organizational commitment is important because it deals with how employees work, identify themselves with the company and finally stay in the company. According to Allen and Meyer [20], organizational commitment is described as the psychological engagement felt by an individual to the organization that will affect the extent to which individuals internalize or adopt organizational characteristics or perspectives [19]. Moreover, Allen and Meyer describe organizational commitment into three components which is affective, continuance, and normative [19]. Affective commitment refers to a condition in which employees have an emotional attachment with the organization. An employee who is affectively committed, strongly identifies with the organization goals and has a strong desire to remain as part of the organization. Allen and Meyer also stated that among the three categories, affective commitment is more important and more strongly related to organizational outcomes [19].

### B. *Job Characteristics*

The job characteristics model with five characteristics is designed by Hackman and Oldham, which show the job that contributes to personal and job-related outcomes by stimulating psychological states which are experienced meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results [16]. Those five characteristics are skill variety (the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work), task identity (the degree to which the job requires completion of "a whole" and identifiable piece of work), task significance (the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people, whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment), autonomy (the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretions to the individual to do his/her job), and feedback (the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his/her performance). A job that has higher job characteristics will provide the individual that does the job to bring more of themselves into the job and make them more engaged (Kahn, 1992 in [4]).

### C. *Human Resource Practice*

Human resource practice research still continue, one of the newest is Robbins and Judge's research, in which they explained human resource practices as all activities of human resource management that include recruitment, development, and maintenance of employees, which need to be planned and implemented strategically with high commitment to be able to produce employee work outcomes that support organizational goals [21]. Also, from human resource books, human resource practice is defined as everything that covers all aspects of how a person is employed and how to manage an organization [22]. Before Armstrong, a book by Robbins, Delery and Doty describe strategic human resources practices as those that

are theoretically or empirically related to overall organization performance, although not all human resources practices are strategic [13]. Strategic human resource management includes selective staffing, developmental appraisal, competitive and equitable compensation, and comprehensive training and development activities.

#### *D. Employee Engagement*

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker (2002) stated that employee engagement is a positive work-related condition that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Employees who are highly attached to their job will take a proactive approach to solve a problem encountered. But, before Schaufeli research, employee engagement define as a form of work identity in which more employees believe in what they do and how employees identify themselves with their work, so they have more thought to contribute to the success of their organization (Kahn, 1990). Moreover, employee engagement can also be described as desirable condition and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it has both attitudinal and behavioral components [23].

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *A. Method*

This research was conducted using a quantitative approach. A total of 462 employees working at a mining company, an agriculture company, and an educational institution in Jakarta participated as respondents. The response rate is 77 percent from 600 targeted respondents. As suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, a more acceptable sample size is 10 times the number of questionnaire items [24]. These three organizations were targeted because the researchers aimed to obtain sufficient heterogeneity to ascertain the stability of the construct relationship [25]. All respondents should also meet the criteria of having been working in the current job for minimum one year. This research used non-probability sampling method which is convenience sampling). Data were collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires included a cover letter/consent form that informed respondents about the purpose of the research. The questionnaire is given to top level management, then distributed to employees that meet the respondent criteria. The questionnaire was also develop based on previous research. Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova [26]. UWES was selected because it is a widely used questionnaire to measure employee engagement and UWES can also be used on positive organizational behavior [26]. Job characteristics were measured using the job diagnostic survey (JDS) developed by Hackman and Oldham [16]; this questionnaire was selected because each item in this scale corresponds to the core of job characteristics [4]. Moreover, affective commitment was measured using the organizational commitment questionnaire developed by Allen and Meyer [20], and human resource practices were measured using a questionnaire developed by Delery and Doty [13].

Allen and Meyer's questionnaire was used because of the stability of validity and reliability of this scale in various research that was conducted previously [20]. Human resource questionnaire from Delery and Doty was used because it can cover all the aspects that need to be measured. From the previous research it was proved to have high validity and reliability, and considered to measure strategic HR practice [27]. The final questionnaire was tested for its validity and reliability before the data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using structural equation modeling.

#### *B. Research Model*

The research model developed in this study refers to several previous studies such as Saks, that was testing the model about antecedent and consequence of employee engagement [4], Fiorito, Bozeman, Young, and Meurs, that investigated the impacts of employee engagement on organizational commitment [28], and Meyer and Smith (2009), who also investigated the impact of human resource practice on affective organizational commitment. Figure 1 below describes the relationship among human resource practice, job characteristics, employee engagement and organizational commitment with job characteristics as a mediating variable. Hypothesis 6 and 7 are indicating the mediation effect of job characteristics in the relationship among human resource practice with affective commitment and employee engagement. Previous research by Piccolo and Colquitt put the job characteristics as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leader and organizational commitment [29].

According to Delery and Doty, there are seven practices that are consistently considered as strategic human resource practice [13]. Both commitment and strategic human resource practice can help a company to create a high-performance working system and improve organizational behavior like commitment, competency, and flexibility, which in turn leads to improved employee performance [14]. Human resource practice can create a condition that promote employee involvement, participation as well as development. This condition is aligned closely with the concept of a job characteristic model proposed by Hackman and Oldham [16]. According to Hackman and Oldham, this job characteristic model can produce several outcomes such as internal motivation, job satisfaction, and higher performance [16]. Also, Diamantidis and Chatzoglou's research show the influence of human resource practice on job characteristics through the implementation of human resource influence [17]. Based on that, the first hypothesis was developed as follows.

H1: Human resource practice has a positive significant influence on job characteristics.

Mowday (1982) in [20] mentioned that job characteristics can influence organizational commitment, specifically affective commitment. Saks also said that job characteristics as antecedents of employee engagement has an influence on organizational commitment with engagement as mediator [4]. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this research is as follows:

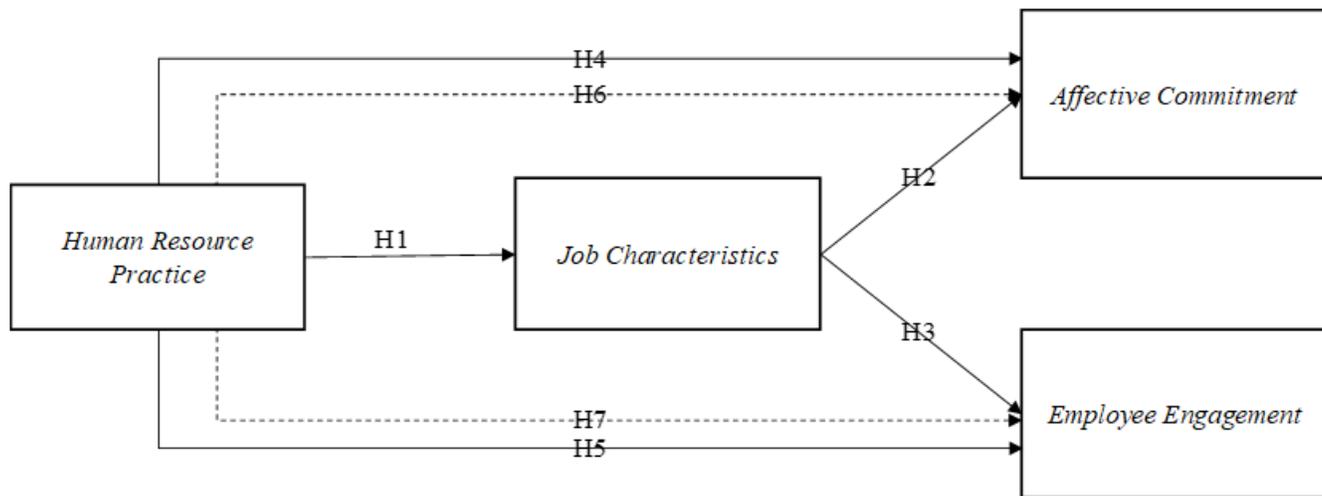


Fig. 1. Research model.

Sources: [4], [17], [28], [29]

H2: Job Characteristics have a significant positive influence on affective commitment.

Meaningful work for the employees can be developed from job characteristics (i.e. jobs that require a different form of skills and knowledge, opportunities to contribute more, have autonomy, and significant impact for oneself and also for the organization). This explanation corresponds to the job characteristic model developed by Hackman and Oldham [16]. Job characteristics have five dimensions that are variety skills, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Saks showed that job characteristics have a significant influence on employee engagement [4]. Based on that, the third hypothesis in this research was developed as follows:

H3: Job characteristics have a significant positive influence on employee engagement.

Relationships between human resource practices and organizational commitment can be seen from the form of human resource practices that can affect the perceptions of the employees themselves. Employee perceptions that can affect how employees have views on their work and also the organization. HR practices also play a role in keeping the commitment of an employee in the organization. As with consequences, strategies in making committed employees can be formed from human resource practices in the organization [4]. Then, the fourth hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H4: Human resource practices have a significant positive influence on affective commitment.

Human resource practices have several dimensions that include recruitment and selection, training, payroll, and performance appraisal. Fulfillment of employee's basic needs is one application of human resource practices. Once the basic needs of employees are met by the company, the employee can focus on his work. When employees are focused to do their work, the level of their engagement will increase [30]. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was developed as follows:

H5: Human resource practices have a significant positive influence on employee engagement.

Baron and Kenny's (1986) research in [4] discuss the conditions that must be fulfilled to form a mediation. The condition is the independent variable should be linked to the mediator. Then, the mediator must also be related to the dependent variable. Lastly, the significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable will be reduced or no longer significant when associated with the mediator. The role of human job characteristics as mediator is based on a condition that the job characteristics have an influence on affective commitment, job characteristics are also influenced by human resource practice based on Diamantidis & Chatzoglou's research [17]. Based on the explanation, the condition for mediation is fulfilled, therefore the sixth hypotheses of this research are as follows:

H6: Human Resource Practices have a significant positive influence on affective commitment, mediated by job characteristics.

Having employees who are bound by the values and goals of the company, and able to provide the maximum contribution to the company are extremely crucial [6]. Jafri in his research had proved that the more positive employees were towards their work, the higher their creativity to produce new ideas [7]. Therefore, employee engagement is also an important issue that a company should consider. From Saks, job characteristics is one of the antecedents of employee engagement [4]. Also, Dessler et. al. showed the importance of human resource practice to improve employee engagement [30]. Then, the role of job characteristics as mediator and antecedent of employee engagement can mediate the relationship of human resource practice with employee engagement. Based on the explanation, the seventh hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H7: Human Resource Practices have a significant positive influence on employee engagement, mediated by job charac-

TABLE I  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF RESPONDENT

		Frequency	Percentage%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	280	60.6
	Female	182	39.4
<b>Age</b>	Above 55 Years Old	25	5.4
	38–55 Years Old	236	51.1
	Below 38 Years Old	201	43.5
<b>Education</b>	Senior High School or Equivalent	29	6.3
	Diploma	52	11.3
	Bachelor	282	61.0
	Master	96	20.8
	Doctoral	3	0.6
<b>Working Time</b>	1–5 Year	145	31.4
	6–10 Year	124	26.8
	11–15 Year	60	13.0
	> 15 Year	133	28.8

Source: Data Process.

TABLE II  
T-VALUE FROM STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING ANALYSIS

	Variable	Job Characteristics	Employee Engagement	Affective Commitment
1.	<b>HR Practice</b>	11.88	3.68	2.89
2.	<b>Job Characteristics</b>	–	8.36	8.82

Source: Data Process.

teristics.

#### IV. RESULTS

The result of validity testing showed that some of the items in this research were not valid. Consequently, those items should be deleted. For reliability testing, composite reliability (CR) and variance extracted (VE) was analyzed. The items can be considered reliable if the value of composite reliability (CR) is above or equal to 0.70, and variance extracted (VE) is greater than or equal to 0.50.

##### A. Respondent Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the respondent demographics. Table I presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents. Based on the results of descriptive statistics analysis, it can be seen that the gender distribution of the respondents from this research is mostly male with a total of 280 respondents. Most respondents also have a bachelor degree in education with a total of 282 respondents. Regarding working time, the result shows that respondents are mostly already in their jobs for 1 to 5 years.

##### B. Hypothesis Analysis

Table II shows the t-values for the relationships between variables in this research. The t-values which are considered significant is above 1.645. First, H1 is accepted because from the SEM analysis, t-value shown from the relationship between human resource practice and job characteristics is 11.88, which makes the relationship significant and positive. The job characteristics also have a significant influence on both employee engagement and affective commitment as seen from the t-value of 8.36 and 8.82 for each relationship. Then, human resource practices also have a significant influence on

employee engagement with a t-value of 3.68 and with affective commitment, the t-value is 2.89. This result makes H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 to be all accepted.

Then, for testing the mediating effects of job characteristics, this refers to Baron and Kenny (1986) in which some conditions must be met to be called mediation. The mediation effect from the hypotheses can be evaluated using the direct and indirect values. The result shows that H6 and H7 are accepted, as shown in Table 3 below, whereas the indirect effect shows bigger values, which indicates the mediation effect of job characteristics on the relationship between human resource practice and affective commitment, as well as employee engagement.

#### V. DISCUSSION

In general, the results of this research show the importance of human resource practice for an organization. Human resource practice has a significant influence on all variables. In other words, effective implementation of human resource practices that includes training, internal career opportunities, job description, participation, and reward can improve affective commitment, job characteristics, and employee engagement from their employees.

Human resource has a significant influence on job characteristics. This result shows that human resource practice's influence on the job design that can increase the work motivation from the employees. This statement also supports Hackman and Oldham's research on improving motivation through job design [16]. Human resource is related to job characteristics, but not all of the practice can be used to improve job characteristics. Delery and Doty describe seven dimensions that strategic human resource practice has [13]; this research show that only five dimensions are related to job characteristics. Lamba and Choudhary also show that not all

TABLE III  
MEDIATION ANALYSIS

Relations	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
<b>HR Practice to Affective Commitment</b>	0.17	0.53
<b>HR Practice to Employee Engagement</b>	0.22	0.48

Source: Data Process.

human resource is related to all types of jobs [31]. Human resource practice, from the results, also has a significant influence on employee engagement and affective commitment. From this result, the better the practice, the engagement and commitment from the employee also become better. Dessler et al. in a book of human resource management also show the role of human resource to improve employee engagement in companies [30]. This supports the result from this research.

Aside from human resource practice, this research also shows the influence of job characteristics. Job characteristics also have a significant influence on employee engagement and affective commitment. Better job characteristics will also show better affective commitment and employee engagement. This also supports Saks' research on the antecedents and consequence of employee engagement [4]. This result also supports Rai, Ghosh, Chauhan, and Mehta's study about the relationship between job characteristics and employee engagement [32]. Job characteristics also have a role as a mediator variable. The results from this result also support that hypothesis, the results shows an indirect effect from the relationship between human resource practice with both employee engagement and affective commitment is higher than the direct effect.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Research regarding job characteristics as a mediator can be expanded to cover more industries. The implementation of the strategy to improve affective commitment and employee engagement can be different for each industry. From the results and the discussion above, we can conclude that human resource practice has a significant and positive influence on affective commitment, job characteristics, and employee engagement. That makes the improvement on human resource practice to also improve the job characteristics as well as employee engagement and affective commitment. The organization can improve their training and internal job opportunities, and also improve the job description, work evaluation, and employment security. The improvement from that factor will improve the job characteristics, affective commitment, and employee engagement. Job characteristics also have a significant influence on both affective commitment and employee engagement. The improvement on task identity, autonomy of the job, feedback, variety of the skills, and improvement on task significance will improve the engagement and affective commitment. Job characteristics also act as a mediator for both relationships between human resource practice and affective commitment as well as employee engagement.

## VII. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research also has some limitations; firstly, the data was collected using a self-reported questionnaire. This method can create problems of bias and thus the researcher should interpret the result carefully. However, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire have been tested and proved to be valid and reliable. Secondly, this research also uses cross-sectional data. It is suggested that in future research, a longitudinal method can be applied to be able to analyze the dynamics of the relationship among variables across different time. Lastly, the data in this research was collected using convenience sampling. Consequently, the generalizability of the results is limited to the intended population only. It is suggested in future research that other types of sampling methodology, such as random samplings can be applied. It is also suggested that in the future, the research can cover more industries.

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