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Mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between human resource management practices and employee engagement

Does black box stage exist?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment (OC) on the relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and employee engagement among banking employees in the context of an emerging economy namely Bangladesh.

Design/methodology/approach – The survey data include 383 employees from 30 private commercial banks in Bangladesh. For analyzing the data, structural equation modeling is employed with the bootstrapping method.

Findings – This study finds that HRM practices such as career advancement, employee participation, job security, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development are the significant predictors of employee engagement. Results also identify OC as a partial mediator on HRM practices and employee engagement relationship which suggest that direct relationship of predictors and criterion variables are stronger than indirect association. More interestingly, findings indicate that the mechanism of black-box stage is not always work on the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance.

Originality/value – Exploring the role of OC on the relationship between HRM practices and employees' behavioral outcome, i.e. employee engagement, is appeared as an initial effort in the academic literature. Furthermore, empirical research that examines the association of different organizational factors with employee engagement through OC is rarely been investigated. Thus, the findings of this study act as a strategic tool for the bank managers to design their organizational policies in such a way that fosters their employee' level of engagement.

Keywords Employee engagement, Organizational commitment, HRM practices, Banks, SET

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In recent time, organizations need highly energetic, enthusiastic, dedicated and engaged employees in their workforce (Chen, 2017; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008) as employees with higher engagement at works can contribute more in organizational success and competitiveness (Al Mehrzi and Singh, 2016; Gruman and Saks, 2011). Bal *et al.* (2013) noted that highly engaged workforce is more likely to have passion in their work and deeply connected with their company's goals whereas disengaged workers are more concerned about time rather energy or dedication during their role performance. Engaged employees are energetically and effectively connected to their work, which, in turn, positively affects organizational performance metrics (Kahn, 1990). In addition, an ample of prior studies observed the positive effect of employee engagement on organizational



performance (Katou, 2017; Hansen *et al.*, 2014; Agarwal, 2014; Menguc *et al.*, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2012; Dalal *et al.*, 2012; Chughtai and Buckley, 2011; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Saks, 2006), financial results (Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010; Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009), return on assets and profitability (Macey *et al.*, 2009), employees' job performance (Bakker and Bal, 2010) and customer satisfaction (Salanova *et al.*, 2005). This is imperative, thus, for organizations to focus on the development of employee engagement for sustainable performances in the current highly competitive business environment (Rai *et al.*, 2017; Macey *et al.*, 2009). Given the vibrant desire of highly engaged workforce in the diversified work context, an increasing number of human resource management (HRM) literature has emphasized on the relationship between HRM practices and employee outcomes (Presbitero, 2017; Vemić-Đurković *et al.*, 2013), and on the process or mechanism by which HRM practices–employee performance relationship works (Chen, 2017; Huang *et al.*, 2017).

Though employee engagement, in the last decade, has got nascent attention in the literature of HRM field, little is known about the effect of organizational practices (e.g. HRM practices) on employee engagement (Chen, 2017; Karatepe and Demir, 2014; Wollard and Shuck, 2011; Lee Whittington and Galpin, 2010). Moreover, previous research provides inconclusive results which are deficient in understanding about the role of various organizational practices to enhance employee engagement (Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin, 2014; Reissner and Pagan, 2013). Inconclusive results of prior empirical studies (e.g. Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin, 2014; Shuck *et al.*, 2014; Karatepe, 2013; Saks, 2006) and critical debates of conceptual papers (e.g. Brown and Reilly, 2013; Welch, 2011; Lee Whittington and Galpin, 2010; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008) merit the further study about the factors affecting employee engagement. In the context of service organizations, more specifically, employee engagement is more critical because of the crucial role of organizational practices (i.e. HRM practices) (Presbitero, 2017; Yeh, 2013; Ashill and Rod, 2011). In addition, scholars (e.g. Presbitero, 2017; Rai *et al.*, 2017; Lee and Ok, 2015; Suan and Nasurdin, 2013; Karatepe, 2011) pointed out that limited studies have conducted to examine the predictors of employee engagement in the context of service industry. Moreover, previous studies (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2017; Chen, 2017; Boon and Kalshoven, 2014; Menguc *et al.*, 2013; Alfes *et al.*, 2013) identified that HRM practices and employee outcomes relationship is not straightforward and the mechanism by which the relationship works has not been adequately addressed in the literature (Chen, 2017; Karatepe, 2013; Wright *et al.*, 2003), which is termed as “black-box” problem. Organizational factors, i.e. HRM practices, play a key role to promote positive attitudes and level of motivation among employees (Huang *et al.*, 2017; Katou, 2017; Othman and Nasurdin, 2013; Ashill and Rod, 2011; Zavyalova *et al.*, 2011; Kusluvan *et al.*, 2010), which, in turn, positively influence employee behavior (Katou, 2017; Huang *et al.*, 2017; Karatepe, 2013; Christian *et al.*, 2011; Salanova *et al.*, 2005; Delery and Shaw, 2001). Thus, this study aims to examine the mediating role of employee positive attitude (i.e. organizational commitment (OC)) on the relationship between HRM practices (career advancement, employee participation, job security, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development) and employee engagement among banking employees of Bangladesh.

In the academic literature, engagement has been conceptualized based on the dominant framework of job demand–resource (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). This model explained employee engagement based on job and personal related resources. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) incorporated physical, organizational and social aspects of a job that could help to reduce job-related demands and different physiological or psychological costs; give opportunity for learning and internal growth and help to attain work objectives (De Lange *et al.*, 2008). The JD-R model is a very influential framework to establish the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. However, the JD-R model cannot explain the varying level of engagement

among employees, and thus, research gaps still remain that need to be addressed. For example, Saks (2006) argued that the more theoretical foundation has been found to explain employee engagement in the reciprocal norms of social exchange theory (SET) that describes the mutual relationship between two parties (Presbitero, 2017; Karatepe, 2011). Though Kahn's (1990) model indicated some psychological conditions that are crucial for employee engagement, it did not clearly explore why employees will be responsive to those particular conditions with varying extent of their engagement. In addition, a stronger hypothetical foundation for understanding and studying employee engagement has been found in the norms of SET (Karatepe, 2011) which describes the reciprocal relationship between two parties (Presbitero, 2017; Chuang and Liao, 2010). According to Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015), if employees receive economic or socio-economic resources through HRM practices, they feel obliged to repay the organization because of their reciprocal relationship with the employer, and Hoon Song *et al.* (2014) asserted that one of the ways for employee to repay their organization is through higher level of engagement. This study, therefore, is an attempt to examine the relationship between HRM practices, OC and employee engagement under the tenet of SET.

Bangladesh is an overpopulated country suffering from immense social, political, economic and environmental problems, which should be addressed properly for its overall development. However, economic development is one of the major agenda that may improve the overall situation of the country (Masum *et al.*, 2016). For the developing economies like Bangladesh, desired level of economic development can be attained by formulating capital through a healthy financial system (Nguyen *et al.*, 2011) and Masum *et al.* (2016) stated that banks have the vital influences for the economic growth of Bangladesh. After achieving the independence in 1971, Bangladesh, as part of the adaption of socialistic economic framework, nationalized all private banks and form four state-owned banks. However, in the late 1980s, Bangladesh gradually started to reform its economy in line with capitalistic system, which allowed establishing private banks. The banking industry in Bangladesh is one of the major service sectors that contribute significantly to the national economy (Masum *et al.*, 2016). Thus, it is an important issue to investigate employee engagement of the banks in Bangladesh.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1 Employee engagement

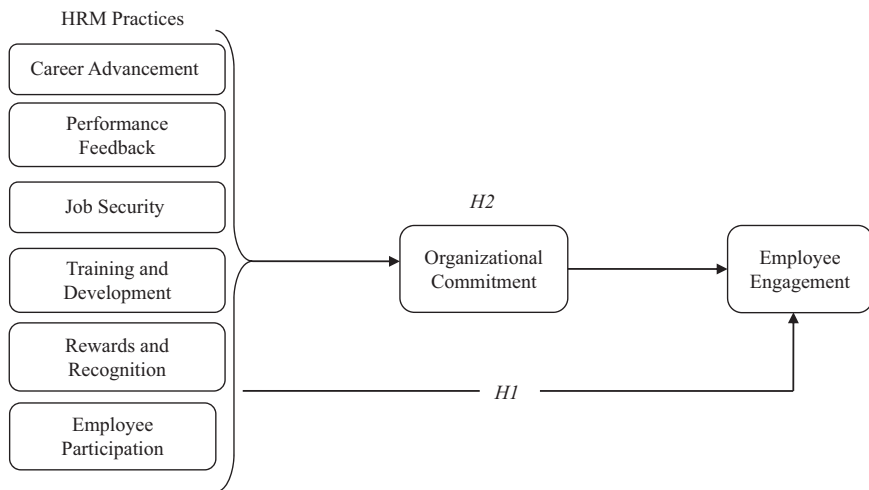
The concept of employee engagement has got a great consideration in the academic literature. Kahn (1990), at first, termed employee engagement as the extent to which employees are physically involved, cognitively attentive and emotionally connected towards their work (p. 692). During the years, research studies on employee engagement have flourished concentrating attention on employees' engagement within organizational context. Rothbard (2001), likely Kahn (1990), defined employee engagement as a psychological presence of employees during performing their work and suggesting two critical components of engagement such as attention and absorption of employees. Therefore, employee engagement is defined as the psychological presence at a particular work role that involves attention and absorption (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008; Saks, 2006). In addition, May *et al.* (2004) conceptualized engagement as the combination of both cognitive and emotional work and work activities experiences which make an individual behave while performing a job. However, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) gave the most prominent aspects of employee engagement and defined employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor (i.e. high level of energy and mental resilience), dedication (i.e. enthusiasm) and absorption (i.e. full concentration during work).

2.2 HRM practices and employee engagement

Over the decades, an expanding number of literature focuses on the process in which different predictors affect employee performance (Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin, 2014), and the dominant concept among this academic literature is the notion of HRM practices claiming to have robust influences on employee behavioral outcomes (Rai *et al.*, 2017). Noe *et al.* (2010) defined HRM practices as the philosophy, policy, system and practices that have an influence on employees' behavior, attitudes and performance. According to Snell and Bohlander (2013), HRM practices are the process by which organization could manage their human capital to accomplish organizational objectives. Specifically, HRM practices are the fundamental activities by which the organization can develop and shape the skills, abilities and behavior of the employees to do their job successfully and focus to meet the targets, i.e. organizational goals. According to SET, a reciprocal relationship could be found through a series of interactions between two parties who are in a state of reciprocate interdependence and felt obligated (Blau, 1986). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) noted that when organizations provide economic and socio-emotional resources to their employee, employees will also feel obligated in kind and want to give something in return to their organization. Based on SET, scholars (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2017; Menguc *et al.*, 2013) suggested that supportive organizational practices (i.e. HRM practices) send important messages to employees that they are being valued for their effort which make them feel obligated and show high level of engagement as repayment. According to Kahn (1990), when employees get clear benefits (i.e. psychological meaningfulness), protective guarantees (i.e. psychological safety) and resources to honor (i.e. psychological availability) from their organizations, they tend to engage more at work. Since HRM practices are considered critically to lead these psychological conditions (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Rousseau and Greller, 1994), an organization can enhance the extent of employee engagement by adoption of appropriate HRM practices. However, most of the prior research (e.g. Chen, 2017; Huang *et al.*, 2017; Karatepe, 2013; Menguc *et al.*, 2013; Azoury *et al.*, 2013) considered HRM practices as a bundle of individual practices that are likely to use as a combined measure. Chen (2017), for instance, used training, promotion, security, appraisal and empowerment as an aggregate measure of HRM practices to examine the predictor of employee engagement. Moreover, there is a scant research that has been conducted to identify the individual impact of HRM practices on engagement (Saks, 2006; Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin, 2014). Moreover, prior studies (e.g. Boon and Kalshoven, 2014; Suan Choo *et al.*, 2013; Karatepe, 2013; Shuck *et al.*, 2011; Saks, 2006) observed significant role of different HRM practices to enhance employee engagement. Particularly, prior studies (Huang *et al.*, 2017) considered AMO dimension of HRM practices by ignoring the dimension of soft HRM practices. Marescaux *et al.* (2012) noted that soft HRM practices emphasize on the development and empowerment of the employees to make a skilled workforce who can ultimately help to enhance organizational performance. As such, soft HRM approach comprises the practices that help to create participative and proactive labor force (Stone *et al.*, 2009), and accordingly, Marescaux *et al.* (2012) mentioned HRM practices that are considered as "soft" such as employee participation, career development, training and developmental feedback. Therefore, this paper considers career advancement, employee participation, job security, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development as soft HRM practices to theorize their relationships with employee engagement (see Figure 1).

Testing the role of organizational resources on engagement may contribute in sociology literature as well. Ivancevich *et al.* (2006) suggested that organizational success highly depends on the role of its human resources who need to think creatively, work proactively and perform in a challenging working environment. Caesens *et al.* (2014) stated that organizational resources could play an extrinsic motivational role as a resourceful work environment, which, in turn, increases employees' well-being. Similarly, Taipale *et al.* (2011) noted that in social science research, the positive facets of work have been overlooked, and generally consideration has

Figure 1.
Research framework



given on the negative aspects like burnout or increasing demands of work life. To fill this research gap, this study considers the positive linkage of HRM practices and employee engagement. Overall outcomes of this study may help to identify the importance of resourceful work context through appropriate HRM practices and organizations need to concern not only for better productivity, but also for their employees' well-being to improve their quality of life:

H1. HRM practices (career advancement, employee participation, job security, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development) are significantly associated with employee engagement.

Career advancement and employee engagement. Career advancement is the process by which an organization creates prospect for the advancement of employees' career (Herzberg, 1986). Scholars (e.g. Bristol and Tisdell, 2010; Wiley, 1997) asserted that career advancement opportunity is one of the most important motivational factors that may positively influence employee behavior. When an organization introduces career advancement opportunities, employees acknowledge the organizational concern for their well-being which, in turn, reduces their burnout (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Chuang and Liao, 2010). Since proper career advancement practice intrinsically motivates employees and abates burnout, it may lead higher employee engagement (Albrecht, 2012). In addition, a set of prior empirical studies (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2017; Ugwu and Okojie, 2017; Alias *et al.*, 2014; Sarti, 2014; Batista *et al.*, 2013; Bal *et al.*, 2013) found career advancement as the significant predictor of employee engagement. However, Tan and Nasurdin (2011) observed the insignificant relationship between career advancement opportunities and employee engagement. However, Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) argued that employees who do not get a proper career path within the organization are more likely to be demotivated during role performance, resulting in a low level of engagement at their job. Moreover, according to the tenet of SET, when employees perceive the high-performance work practices like career advancement in their organization to improve their well-being, they feel obligated and want to reciprocate by contributing in the organization with positive attitude (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015). Therefore, this study, in line with SET, postulates the positive association between career advancement and employee engagement:

H1a. Career advancement is positively related to employee engagement.

Employee participation and employee engagement. Employee participation is the extent to which employees get the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process of an organization (Heery and Noon, 2001). According to Cheung and Wu (2011), employee participation is very crucial for achieving organizational goals. If employees perceive the participative decision-making process within the organization, their behavioral outcomes such as OC and employee engagement can be enhanced (Cantor *et al.*, 2012). Previous empirical research (e.g. Cooke *et al.*, 2016; Ugwu and Okojie, 2017; Marescaux *et al.*, 2012) found the significant effect of employee participation on employee engagement, and recommended that employees must get to involve in the organizational decision-making process to make them understand the basic need of creativity and to build appropriate attitude required for better performance (Kingir and Mesci, 2010). Moreover, the participative decision-making process serves as a sense of belongingness between management and employees (Noah, 2008) that may help to create a healthy work environment by reducing work stress which may positively affect employee engagement (Benn *et al.*, 2015). However, though Benn *et al.* (2015) found the positive association between employee participation and performance in the context of service sectors employees, the relationship is insignificant in case of manufacturing employees (Estrin *et al.*, 1987). In addition, inconclusive results have been observed in the same industry such as Cooke *et al.* (2016) identified the significant association between participation and employee engagement for banking employees whereas employee participation was found as an insignificant predictor of organizational performance for the same industry (Delery and Doty, 1996). However, Gollan (2005) stated that high-quality employee participation facilitates positive employee behavior to achieve organizational effectiveness. In this vein, employees with higher participation in the decision-making process feel their importance in the organization for which they reciprocate with positive attitude and behavior toward their job (Gould-Williams, 2007). This study, thus, hypothesizes the positive association of employee participation with employee engagement:

H1b. Employee participation is positively related to employee engagement.

Job security and employee engagement. Job security is the degree to which an organization can offer a stable employment opportunity to their employee (Herzberg, 1968). More specifically, job security is the extent to which an employee could expect to continue his/her job in that particular organization for a specified time (Delery and Doty, 1996). Employees with poor feelings of job security are highly correlated with poor mental and physical health (Strazdins *et al.*, 2004; Chirumbolo and Hellgren, 2003; Hellgren and Sverke, 2003) and psychological distress and burnout (Probst, 2003; Dekker and Schaufeli, 1995). Moreover, Gabris and Simo (1995) indicated that job security acted as a motivational factor for employees, i.e. employees with high level of job security will show the high level of performance and low level of job security result in less motivated in terms of employee outcome (Miller *et al.*, 2001). In another word, as soon as the employees start to worry about their job loss, their behaviors automatically start to go bad (Boya *et al.*, 2008; Domenighetti *et al.*, 2000). Previous empirical studies (Chen, 2017; Ugwu and Okojie, 2017; Şenol, 2011; Poyraz and Kama, 2008; Boya *et al.*, 2008; Kraimer *et al.*, 2005; Sverke *et al.*, 2002) also found job security as one of the most powerful motivational tools for encouraging employees in their job performance by changing the negative work attitudes. In addition, Chirumbolo and Areni (2005) reported that job security provides employees with high motivation which positively affects employee outcome. However, Aarabi *et al.* (2013) did not find the job security as a significant motivational factor to enhance employee attitude toward their work. In addition, Selenko *et al.* (2013) found that the employees with high level of job insecurity intend to perform in a better way to protect their jobs. Thus, prior literature

indicates the debate about the role of job security in employee outcomes. However, Chang (2005) suggested job security as the tool by which organizations show their commitments to their employees and in return, employees reciprocate it in the form of positive attitude in the workplace. This is reflected by the paradigm of SET, and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Therefore, this study theorizes the following hypothesis as the positive association between job security and employee engagement:

H1c. Job security is positively associated with employee engagement.

Performance feedback and employee engagement. Performance feedback is the extent to which employees have the opportunity to get the useful information of their performance that may help them to improve, learn and develop while performing the job (Zhou, 2003). Scholars (Volpone *et al.*, 2012) claimed that favorable performance feedback processes would create favorable psychological climate which will improve the level of employee engagement. In their study, Latham and Mann (2006) suggested that performance evaluation and feedback should be fair and unbiased. Moreover, Coetzer and Rothmann (2007) stated that employees with positive feedback are more likely to have greater level of engagement while negative feedback may lessen it. Based on the norms of SET, Macey and Schneider (2008) explored that when employees will be rewarded (intrinsically or extrinsically) in a fair way by their superior or manager, they will reciprocate by investing more time, energy or personal resources (engagement) to their organization which, in turn, enhances their level of engagement. However, previous empirical studies provided contradict results on the relationship between performance feedback and employee engagement. For instance, Menguc *et al.* (2013) and Van den Broeck *et al.* (2008) found the significant positive relationship between employee engagement and performance feedback, while Sarti (2014) identified that the relationship is insignificant. Notwithstanding, as fairness perception about performance feedback may reduce different employee burnouts such as psychological distress, anxiety and depression (Spell and Arnold, 2007), regular performance feedback can play a vital role to reduce these burnouts which, indeed, can increase the level of engagement (Freeney and Tiernan, 2006). Therefore, this study, based on the reciprocity process of SET, proposes the positive relationship between performance feedback and employee engagement which leads to the following hypothesis:

H1d. Performance feedback is positively related to employee engagement.

Rewards and recognition and employee engagement. Rewards and recognition are important resources offered by the organization that motivate employees to accomplish organizational goal. According to Karatepe (2013), adequate reward can motivate employees to provide outstanding services to customers. In addition, employees often place their view about employer via the reward and recognition system that they receive from that company (Hayes and Ninemeier, 2009), and lack of reward may lead to an unpleasant environment that will reduce work efforts caused by withdrawal of job (Lytle, 1997). However, in their study, Ling Suan and Mohd Nasurdin (2014) found that reward was insignificant to engagement. Authors argued that the reason could be the perception of employees that their reward is not justifying their performance. On the other hand, Breevaart *et al.* (2014) asserted that as organization treats reward as the appreciation tool for better employee performance, reward may affect employees' behavior positively to enhance their engagement at work. Suan Choo *et al.* (2013) also supported the view and considered reward and recognition as the predictor of employee engagement. Previous empirical studies (e.g. Presbitero, 2017; Alias *et al.*, 2014; Karatepe, 2013; Maslach and Leiter, 2008) supported the view that rewards are one of the important elements of work life which may motivate employees to improve their engagement. On the other hand, another set of prior studies (e.g. Sarti, 2014; De Gieter *et al.*, 2008; Saks, 2006) observed the

insignificant influence of rewards and recognition on employee engagement. Sharma and Sharma (2010) reported that reward and recognition had limited capacity to explain the adequate variance related to employee behavior, i.e. engagement. However, Karatepe (2013), based on SET, found that when employees receive appropriate rewards and recognition from their organization, they feel obligated to their organization which, in turn, leads to the higher level of employee engagement. Robinson *et al.* (2004) also observed the reflection of reciprocity behavior of employees that the extent of employee engagement depends on the rewards employees receive from their organization. Moreover, employees with appropriate socio-emotional resources, i.e. reward and recognition, feel obliged to repay their organization and show higher level of engagement (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, this study assumes that the positive association of reward and recognition with employee engagement promulgates the following hypothesis:

H1e. Rewards and recognition is positively related to employee engagement.

Training and development and employee engagement. Training and development is the organizational investment to develop the appropriate skills and abilities of employees so that they can perform better to achieve organizational goal. According to Yang and Fu (2009), training and development programs are designed by the organization to enhance employees' job-related skills and abilities, which may help employees to handle different, complicated organizational situations (Karatepe *et al.*, 2007; Schlesinger and Heskett, 1991). In fact, HRM literature has identified training and development as one of the most important predictors of employee behavior and employee performance (Huang *et al.*, 2017; Goh and Pavic, 2013; Schuler and MacMillan, 1984). For instance, Kahn (1990) stated that organizations can provide resources to their employees through training and development program to make them feel that they have the capability to perform in a better way which, in turn, helps to enhance the level of engagement. In addition, training and development program may help to build employees confident toward their work that ultimately helps to increase the feelings of availability (Presbitero, 2017; Gruman and Saks, 2011). Moreover, previous empirical research found that training has positive association with psychological health of employees (Luthans *et al.*, 2008), and better psychological health of employees can lead to an increasing level of employee engagement (Gruman and Saks, 2011). This positive relationship between training and development and employee engagement can also be explained under the tenet of SET that stated that employees with proper training and development will feel that their organizations are investing lot for their development and reciprocate by showing a high level of engagement at their work role (Ling Suan and Mohd Nasuridin, 2014). However, some other studies showed the insignificant relationship between training and employee positive attitudes (Batt, 2002) arguing that the possible reason for such type of results could be the improper training program that actually is not improving the employee skills related to job. Thus, it can be observed that there is a lack of clear understanding about the role of training and development to enhance employee engagement which may lead to the following hypothesis:

H1f. Training and development is positively associated with employee engagement.

2.3 The mediating role of OC on HRM practices

Over the time, a growing number of HRD literature has shown the relationship between HRM practices and different organizational consequences such as organizational performance (Lu *et al.*, 2015), OC (Fabi *et al.*, 2015), job satisfaction (Fabi *et al.*, 2015), employee job performance, absenteeism, turnover rate (Ahmad and Allen, 2015), supporting that the notion of HRM practices are a crucial indicator for organizational achievement.

But there is still a dearth on HRM practices research to explain its theoretical amplification of black-box phenomenon that why or how a specific HRM practice can improve organizational performance (Huang *et al.*, 2017; Boselie *et al.*, 2005). Although studies have focused on the employees' efforts that help to achieve firm success, research on integration of employee attitudes and behaviors is interestingly very limited. For instance, Boselie *et al.* (2005) conducted over 100 research studies on HRM practices, among them only 11 studies included survey data of employees to examine employees' attitudes and behaviors such as OC and employee engagement. Moreover, Wood and de Menezes (2011) noted that very few research studies have attempted properly to test the mechanism through which HRM practices and employee outcomes relationship work at the individual level.

This study argues that OC can mediate the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. According to Allen and Meyer (1996), OC is the psychological relationship between employees and organization for which employees are less likely to leave their organization voluntarily. HRM practices play critical role to influence employees' attitudes to build OC in order to avoid the high cost of turnover (Wijnmaalen *et al.*, 2016; Lee Whittington and Galpin, 2010), and to increase job satisfaction (Misra *et al.*, 2013; Chen, 2004). Suliman and Al-Junaibi (2010) stated that employees with high level of OC have strong feelings to stay with the organization. Thus, OC is treated as one of the key factors to achieve organizational success (Suliman and Al-Junaibi, 2010; Suliman and Iles, 2000), and organization should understand the way by which they can improve the level of employees' commitment to enhance the employees' on-the-job positive behavior (Albrecht, 2006; Meyer and Allen, 1991). Although a set of prior studies (e.g. Sharma and Sharma, 2010; Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010; Papalexandris and Galanaki, 2009) concerned to treat employee engagement as a distinct concept than OC, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) noted that academic scholars define employee engagement as a unique construct. According to Saks (2006), as employee engagement consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioral components related to individual role performance, it is notably distinguishable from OC. In addition, the "discriminant validity" between these two constructs in prior research (Christian *et al.*, 2011; Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006) suggests employee entanglement as a distinct construct. However, the causal order between OC and engagement is not clear rather inconclusive (Hakanen and Roodt, 2010). Though some previous studies (Karatepe, 2013; Albrecht, 2012; Albrecht and Andreetta, 2011) considered OC as the outcome of employee engagement, other studies (Katou, 2017; van Gelderen and Bik, 2016; Yalabik *et al.*, 2013) considered OC as an antecedent of employee engagement rather than outcome. Yalabik *et al.* (2013) pointed out two important reasons to treat OC as antecedent: first, as OC is treated as an antecedent of various forms of psychological or behavioral outcomes of employees (Zopiatis *et al.*, 2014; Kara *et al.*, 2013; Macey and Schneider, 2008), it might be the predictor of the employee engagement which, in fact, is one of psychological outcomes (Jose and Mampilly, 2014; Woods and Sofat, 2013; Leroy *et al.*, 2013; Soane *et al.*, 2013; Robertson *et al.*, 2012; Kahn, 1990). Second, since OC involves the emotional attachment of employees to an organization, it provides them the confidence to ask for necessary resources and exert energy toward their jobs, which, in turn, improves the level of employee well-being (Panaccio and Vandenberghe, 2009).

Notwithstanding the overlapping and direction of relationship debate related to OC and engagement, some prior studies (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2017; Chen, 2017; Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015) identified the HRM practices-employee performance relationship as a conditional relationship which depends on some other organizational-specific and/or employee-specific factors. Moreover, several prior studies (Zopiatis *et al.*, 2014; Theriou and Chatzoglou, 2009) found that OC significantly mediates the relationship between its antecedents and consequences. Therefore, to deepen understanding of the mechanisms

inside the “black box” of the HRM practices–employee outcome relationship, this study theorizes the mediating role of OC in the relationship of HRM practices and employee engagement (see Figure 1):

- H2. OC mediates the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.
- H2a. OC mediates the relationship between career advancement and employee engagement.
- H2b. OC mediates the relationship between employee participation and employee engagement.
- H2c. OC mediates the relationship between job security and employee engagement.
- H2d. OC mediates the relationship between performance feedback and employee engagement.
- H2e. OC mediates the relationship between rewards and recognition and employee engagement.
- H2f. OC mediates the relationship between training and development and employee engagement.

3. Research design and methods

3.1 Research setting: banking industry in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a South Asian emerging economy which has got attention of the global economy for its consistent growth for the last two decades, and the banking sector is projected to contribute in this growth. Though Bangladesh adopted socialistic economic approach after its independence in 1971, it gradually transforms its economic policy in line with market-based economy. The banking industry in Bangladesh is one of the major service sectors that contribute significantly to the national economy (Masum *et al.*, 2016). As a bank-based economy, Bangladesh significantly depends on financial institutions to meet the increasing capital need for its expanding business and economic activities. For example, GDP contribution has been shifted from agriculture to the industrial sector that is a growing sector in Bangladesh and is the main beneficiary of credit from commercial banks (Ahmed, 2017). As the banking sector is more service oriented, the performance of banks depends not only on the availability of physical resources but also on the quality and competence of their employees (Masum *et al.*, 2016; Lee and Ok, 2014). Therefore, overall economic performance of Bangladesh importantly depends on efficient performance of banks to formulate and supply adequate capital to businesses. In addition, as banking sector is the highly human resource based industry, banks rely on the outcomes of its employees for their ultimate performance. Thus, it is an important issue to investigate employee engagement of the banks in Bangladesh. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of HRM practices to make an engaged workforce, and to investigate the black-box mechanism through which HRM practices and employee engagement relationship exists.

3.2 Sampling technique and sample characteristics

The data of this study are collected from those private commercial banks which are listed on Dhaka Stock Exchange located in Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh. Researcher only considers the branches of those banks that are situated in Dhaka Metropolitan Area as all the bank's head offices and branches are in Dhaka city. Thus, the most numbers of branches are covered in this study. In designing the questionnaire, this study employs psychological separation of predictors and criterion to maintain the direction of measurement, to improve the items in scale that help to avoid the ambiguity and other biasness. This process also ensured the evasion to have common method variances in the study. A survey is conducted

among the banking employees of 30 private commercial banks by using this questionnaire. Researchers think to take an initiative to distribute the questionnaires personally to the banking employees in their respective locations and briefly describe the purpose of this study. Sekaran (2003) stated that personal distribution of questionnaires could lead to a higher response rate. A total of 530 questionnaires were distributed to commercial banking employees who were working in Dhaka city. Of them, 395 completed questionnaires were returned from the participants, and the entire data collection process took almost 12 weeks. Yet, out of 395 returned questionnaires, 12 questionnaires were considered unusable as the participants left either the page or questions blank. Thus, these 12 returned questionnaires were treated as incomplete and were excluded from the study. The remaining 383 questionnaires accounted a 72 percent response rate which is sufficient for further analysis as argued by scholars (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010) that a response with 30 percent is adequate for further study.

Demographic profiles of this study show a slightly skewed sample in regard to gender (female representation at 24 percent); the probable reason could be a lower participation of females in the workplace at only 12.91 percent in 2016 (Mehedi and Sumon, 2017). In terms of the age of the participants, results show that most of the respondents belong to age group of 30–35 years. Majority of the respondents have their master degree (46 percent) and have the total experience of working with banks on an average four to eight years (49.9 percent).

3.3 Measures

Employee engagement. This study adapts three-dimensional 17-item scale from Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) to measure employee engagement includes vigor (six items, e.g. I am enthusiastic about my job), dedication (five items, e.g. I am immersed in my work) and absorption (six items, e.g. I can continue working for very long periods at a time). Respondents are requested to rate their level of agreement or disagreement of the given engagement statements through a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This engagement instrument is popularly used in prior literature for both western context (e.g. Hansen *et al.*, 2014) and South Asian context (e.g. Rai *et al.*, 2017). Results show a high value of internal consistency of vigor ($\alpha = 0.84$), dedication ($\alpha = 0.86$) and absorption ($\alpha = 0.82$). Furthermore, all the first-order constructs of employee engagement can have the capability to explain their respective second-order construct as the R^2 values are 0.588, 0.780 and 0.656, respectively.

HRM practices. In terms of HRM practices, this study considers six HRM practices namely career advancement (four items, e.g. I have clear career paths in this bank), employee participation (four items, e.g. Employees in this bank are allowed to make many decisions), job security (four items, e.g. I can stay in the bank for as long as I wish), performance feedback (four items, e.g. My manager gives me feedback on my performance), rewards and recognition (seven items, e.g. Employees in this bank receive a pay raise for improving the level of performance), training and development (four items, e.g. Extensive training and development programs are offered by the bank to improve my job skills) with a total of 26 items adapted from different prior studies (e.g. Saks, 2006; Zhou and George, 2001; Delery and Doty, 1996). Participants are requested to give their feedback on a five-point Likert scale varying from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Cronbach's α value for each of the construct is 0.80, 0.77, 0.80, 0.87, 0.87 and 0.83, respectively.

Organizational commitment. OC is measured with a total of 24 items comprising three dimensions such as affective commitment (AC, eight items), continuance commitment (CC, eight items) and normative commitment (NC, eight items) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). A sample question of AC ($\alpha = 0.88$) includes "I would be happy to spend rest of my career with this organization," for CC ($\alpha = 0.84$) "It would be too costly for me to leave

my bank now” and for NC ($\alpha = 0.76$) “Jumping from bank to bank seems unethical for me.” Respondents are requested to give their opinion through a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This study also establishes the higher-order model by investigating the R^2 values of 0.841, 0.701 and 0.656, respectively.

3.4 Data analysis strategy

This study uses the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (Smart PLS-SEM) 3.0 version software. The PLS-SEM is a second-generation statistical technique that allows researchers to investigate the complex multivariate relationships among observed and latent variables (Vinzi *et al.*, 2010). The PLS-SEM method is treated as the member of regression tools and has been developed to analyze the links between measurement (indicators) and structural model, i.e. constructs (Chin *et al.*, 2003). According to Lowry and Gaskin (2014), PLS-SEM method is strong, flexible and superior for building the statistical model to test and predict the theory. Moreover, PLS-SEM has least limitations on measurement scale, and low sample size, non-normal distribution of data and predicting capability are the additional advantages for using PLS-SEM.

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Measurement model

Scholars (Hair *et al.*, 2016) suggest that to determine the individual indicators reliability through PLS-SEM approach, it is essential to examine the outer loadings of all constructs. Hence, based on the rule of thumb, scholars (Hair *et al.*, 2016) defined that the items with loadings in between 0.40 and 0.70 can be maintained. This study investigates that out of total 67 initial items, 60 items have been retained (see Table I). This indicates that the seven items are deleted because of the poor loadings. The remaining 76 items are kept in the study model that carried the loadings between 0.58 and 0.90 correspondingly. The more details are shown in Table I. Composite reliability for all the latent variables ranges from 0.82 to 0.92 that indicates that all the latent constructs have a satisfactory level of internal consistency as recommended by scholars (Hair *et al.*, 2012; Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

Additionally, this study also investigates the validity of the constructs through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Results show (see Table I) that the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all the latent constructs are in the range between 0.51 and 0.80 which fulfills the rule of thumb that the threshold value of AVE should be above 0.50 as suggested by Chin (1998). Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a specific latent variable is distinctive from other variables (Duarte and Raposo, 2010). This study investigates the discriminant validity by using Fornell and Larcker (1981) method by placing the square root of AVE of all the latent constructs on the correlation matrix diagonal, as shown in Table II with the italic values, and the square roots of AVE should be greater than the correlations within latent variables. The study results show that the square roots of AVE are greater than the correlation values among all the latent variables.

Despite the widely use of Fornell–Larcker approach for doing discriminant validity, it is still considered as a weak method to determine discriminant validity of the constructs as this method cannot give further theoretical justification. Therefore, Henseler *et al.* (2015) proposed a method called Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio of correlations to assess the discriminant validity. In this method, it is deemed to have a predetermined threshold value that needs to be compared with the correlations among the constructs. Table III shows that all the correlation values among the latent constructs are less than the suggested threshold value of 0.85 as suggested by Henseler *et al.* (2015). Hence, it is summarized that all the study constructs are distinct from each other and obtain the discriminant validity based on HTMT method as well. Thus, it is confirmed that the measurement model of this study is valid and reliable.

Construct	Items	Initial model	Modified model	CR	AVE
Vigor	EE1	0.656	0.642	0.838	0.510
	EE2	0.641	0.660		
	EE3	0.695	0.711		
	EE4	0.770	0.791		
	EE5	0.736	0.754		
Dedication	EE6	0.508	Del	0.864	0.561
	EE7	0.754	0.755		
	EE8	0.694	0.696		
	EE9	0.778	0.779		
	EE10	0.798	0.798		
	EE11	0.714	0.712		
Absorption	EE12	0.583	Del	0.820	0.533
	EE13	0.590	Del		
	EE14	0.705	0.765		
	EE15	0.695	0.742		
	EE16	0.675	0.705		
Career advancement	EE17	0.652	0.706	0.871	0.630
	CA1	0.806	0.806		
	CA2	0.860	0.858		
	CA3	0.759	0.764		
Employee participation	CA4	0.743	0.742	0.871	0.628
	EP1	0.764	0.766		
	EP2	0.827	0.826		
	EP3	0.807	0.805		
Job security	EP4	0.770	0.772	0.855	0.598
	JS1	0.811	0.805		
	JS2	0.800	0.799		
	JS3	0.838	0.839		
Performance feedback	JS4	0.626	0.632	0.921	0.796
	PF1	0.893	0.893		
	PF2	0.889	0.888		
Rewards and recognition	PF3	0.895	0.895	0.900	0.562
	R&R1	0.783	0.784		
	R&R2	0.789	0.790		
	R&R3	0.729	0.726		
	R&R4	0.678	0.676		
	R&R5	0.788	0.789		
Training and development	R&R6	0.731	0.732	0.888	0.666
	R&R7	0.743	0.744		
	T&D1	0.830	0.830		
	T&D2	0.723	0.722		
Affective	T&D3	0.864	0.865	0.903	0.539
	T&D4	0.838	0.839		
	OC1	0.772	0.774		
	OC2	0.580	0.581		
	OC3	0.712	0.711		
	OC4	0.682	0.685		
	OC5	0.780	0.781		
	OC6	0.763	0.762		
Continuance	OC7	0.754	0.752	0.880	0.512
	OC8	0.806	0.805		
	OC9	0.660	0.680		
	OC10	0.689	0.709		
	OC11	0.788	0.796		

Table I.
Outer loadings,
composite reliability
(CR) and average
variance
extracted (AVE)

(continued)

Construct	Items	Initial model	Modified model	CR	AVE	HRM practices and employee engagement
Normative	OC12	0.692	0.678	0.837	0.510	
	OC13	0.593	Del			
	OC14	0.722	0.715			
	OC15	0.671	0.680			
	OC16	0.730	0.742			
	OC17	0.496	Del			
	OC18	0.490	Del			
	OC19	0.519	Del			
	OC20	0.696	0.697			
	OC21	0.548	0.592			
	OC22	0.773	0.813			
OC23	0.761	0.790				
OC24	0.610	0.653				

Table I.

	ABS	AC	CA	CC	DED	EP	JS	NC	PF	R&R	T&D	VIG
ABS	0.730											
AC	0.525	0.734										
CA	0.484	0.549	0.793									
CC	0.426	0.619	0.317	0.715								
DED	0.506	0.634	0.569	0.382	0.749							
EP	0.426	0.485	0.465	0.295	0.533	0.793						
JS	0.456	0.492	0.438	0.273	0.426	0.422	0.773					
NC	0.438	0.652	0.432	0.548	0.459	0.402	0.397	0.714				
PF	0.402	0.508	0.480	0.284	0.501	0.455	0.410	0.379	0.892			
R&R	0.500	0.523	0.502	0.320	0.500	0.455	0.500	0.448	0.521	0.750		
T&D	0.443	0.524	0.481	0.289	0.491	0.458	0.385	0.406	0.481	0.522	0.816	
VIG	0.553	0.567	0.483	0.347	0.669	0.406	0.413	0.411	0.510	0.554	0.480	0.714

Table II.
Results of discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker method)

Notes: ABS, absorption; AC, affective commitment; CA, career advancement; CC, continuance commitment; DED, dedication; EP, employee participation; JS, job security; NC, normative commitment; PF, performance feedback; R&R, rewards and recognition; T&D, training and development; VIG, vigor

Establishment of the higher order constructs. This study consists of a higher component model (HCM) that incorporates two higher order constructs (HOC) such as employee engagement and OC that are measured by their lower order constructs (LOC). It is important to note that this study is a reflective-reflective type of HCMs that indicates a (reflective) relationship between HOC and LOCs, where each of the constructs is measured by reflective indicators. Thus, it is essential to investigate whether the HOCs are able to be explained conceptually by their corresponding LOCs before entering to the path model analysis.

Results show that employee engagement is a second-order construct which includes three first-order constructs, namely, vigor, dedication and absorption. All the first-order constructs of employee engagement can have the capability to explain their respective second-order construct as the R^2 values (see Table IV) are 0.588, 0.780 and 0.656, respectively. Moreover, it has also been found that all the first-order constructs of employee engagement have obtained the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criterion that confirmed the distinctiveness of the constructs. In the case of OC, it also includes three first-order constructs such as affective, continuance and normative which have the R^2 values (see Table IV) of 0.841, 0.701 and 0.656, respectively, that indicate the ability of explaining the second-order construct accurately.

Table III.
Heterotrait–Monotrait
(HTMT) Ratio
criterion values

	ABS	AC	CA	CWS	CC	DED	EP	JS	NC	OS	PF	R&R	SS	T&D
ABS	0.666													
AC	0.648	0.661												
CA	0.229	0.357	0.238											
CWS	0.561	0.711	0.391	0.206										
CC	0.660	0.759	0.703	0.416	0.460									
DED	0.565	0.584	0.580	0.379	0.359	0.663								
EP	0.620	0.605	0.546	0.238	0.342	0.528	0.530							
JS	0.601	0.799	0.555	0.278	0.680	0.585	0.520	0.528						
NC	0.414	0.464	0.499	0.325	0.295	0.490	0.446	0.354	0.479					
OS	0.509	0.586	0.571	0.335	0.332	0.596	0.545	0.492	0.471	0.338				
PF	0.628	0.599	0.596	0.281	0.376	0.592	0.542	0.610	0.563	0.406	0.596			
R&R	0.247	0.306	0.233	0.288	0.347	0.207	0.332	0.225	0.323	0.387	0.308	0.177		
SS	0.581	0.614	0.590	0.221	0.349	0.594	0.555	0.480	0.507	0.356	0.562	0.611	0.141	
T&D	0.751	0.691	0.604	0.281	0.431	0.846	0.514	0.534	0.552	0.263	0.620	0.677	0.132	0.598

Notes: ABS, absorption; AC, affective commitment; CA, career advancement; CWS, co-worker support; CC, continuance commitment; DED, dedication; EP, employee participation; JS, job security; NC, normative commitment; OS, organizational support; PF, performance feedback; R&R, rewards and recognition; SS, supervisor support; T&D, training and development; VIG, vigor

4.2 Structural model: test of hypotheses

Direct relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. In order to assess the relationship between independent variables such as HRM practices (performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development, job security, career advancement, employee participation) and dependent variables namely employee engagement, the PLS-SEM bootstrapping process has been conducted using 5,000 samples (Hair *et al.*, 2012). The results (see Figure 2 and Table V) indicate that all the six direct hypothesized relationships between HRM practices and employee engagement are significant, and thus all the six hypotheses are supported. In brief, the positive significant links include: career advancement and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.001$) supporting *H1a*; employee participation and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.01$) confirmed *H1b*; job security and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.113$; $p < 0.01$) that gives support for *H1c*; performance

Second-order construct	First-order construct	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>R</i> ²
Employee engagement	Vigor	0.768	0.014	63.343	< 0.001	0.588
	Dedication	0.883	0.015	58.889	< 0.001	0.780
	Absorption	0.883	0.025	30.276	< 0.001	0.656
Organizational commitment	Affective commitment	0.917	0.009	101.341	< 0.001	0.841
	Continuance commitment	0.837	0.024	35.527	< 0.001	0.701
	Normative commitment	0.810	0.026	31.517	< 0.001	0.656

Table IV.
Establishing the
second-order
measurement model

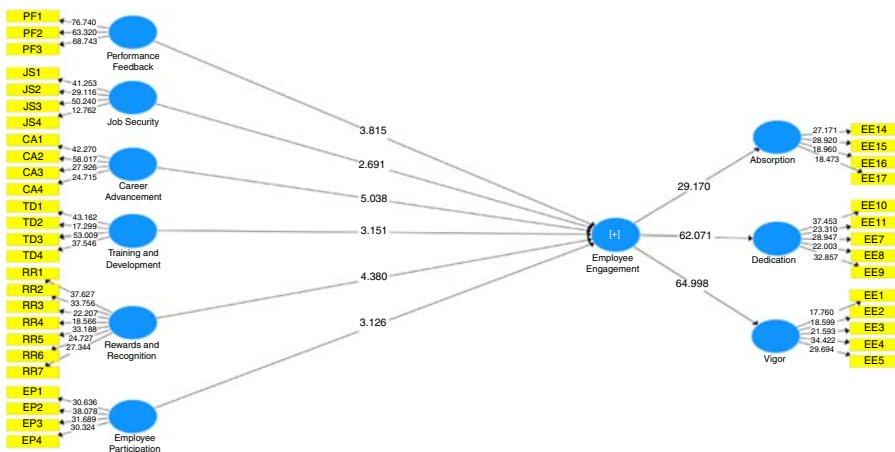


Figure 2.
PLS bootstrapping for
HRM practices and
employee engagement

No.	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Findings
<i>H1a</i>	CA → EE	0.239	0.048	5.038	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H1b</i>	EP → EE	0.149	0.048	3.126	0.002	Supported
<i>H1c</i>	JS → EE	0.113	0.042	2.691	0.007	Supported
<i>H1d</i>	PF → EE	0.152	0.040	3.815	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H1e</i>	R&R → EE	0.208	0.048	4.380	< 0.001	Supported
<i>H1f</i>	T&D → EE	0.148	0.047	3.151	0.002	Supported

Notes: EE, employee engagement; PF, performance feedback; JS, job security; CA, career advancement; T&D, training and development; R&R, rewards and recognition; EP, employee participation

Table V.
Results of the direct
relationships between
HRM practices and
employee engagement
(hypotheses testing)

feedback and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.152, p < 0.001$) confirming *H1d*; rewards and recognition and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.208, p < 0.001$) supporting *H1e* and training and development and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.148, p < 0.05$) confirming *H1f*.

Mediation test. Like the first structural path model, the second model is also analyzed by using the PLS-SEM bootstrapping process with 5,000 samples to test the mediation effect on the link between HRM practices and employee engagement. Hair *et al.* (2014) stated that the bootstrapping procedure is appropriately suited for the PLS-SEM mediation testing. To facilitate the testing of mediation effects using PLS-SEM bootstrapping method, this study examines the path coefficient for path “a” and path “b” where the path “a” exhibits the relationship between independent to mediating variables and path “b” represents the links between mediator to dependent variables as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2014). Finally, the variance accounted for (VAF) value has been calculated to get the extent of mediating impact on a proposed relationship (Hair *et al.*, 2014). In Table VI, it is found that in the entire path “a,” relationships between HRM practices and OC are statistically significant and in path “b,” relationship between OC and employee engagement is also significant. It also shows that in direct path “c,” relationships between HRM practices and employee engagement in the presence of OC and all the hypothesized paths are statistically significant.

To estimate the size of the indirect effect, VAF value has been calculated, which means that to what extent the variances of employee engagement can be explained directly by HRM practices, and how much of that particular variances can be explained by the indirect links through OC. According to Hair *et al.* (2014), the VAF value below 20 percent exhibits that there is no mediation effect, VAF value above 80 percent considers full mediation, whilst the partial mediation arises when the VAF value belongs to higher than 20 percent but less than 80 percent. Figure 3 and similarly Table VII exhibit that the mediation effect of OC on the link between career advancement and employee engagement is significant ($\beta = 0.056, p < 0.01$) with a VAF value 23.48 percent which is greater than 20 percent but less than 80 percent depicting partial mediation of OC on career advancement and employee engagement relationship (partially supporting *H2a*). Similarly, employee participation and employee engagement relationship ($\beta = 0.039, p < 0.05$) is also partially mediated by OC (partially supporting *H2b*) as the VAF value is 26 percent that is higher than 20 percent. The indirect relationship of job security and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.042, p < 0.05$) is statistically

Paths	Hypothesized paths	Path coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value
Path a (IV to mediator)	CA → OC	0.198	0.053	3.778	< 0.001
	EP → OC	0.138	0.051	2.696	0.007
	JS → OC	0.149	0.05	2.987	0.003
	PF → OC	0.108	0.06	1.792	0.073
	R&R → OC	0.144	0.058	2.472	0.013
	T&D → OC	0.148	0.063	2.327	0.020
Path b (mediator to DV)	OC → EE	0.282	0.047	5.98	< 0.001
Path c (IV to mediator to DV)	CA → EE	0.182	0.05	3.607	< 0.001
	EP → EE	0.111	0.045	2.458	0.014
	JS → EE	0.072	0.042	1.7	0.089
	PF → EE	0.123	0.042	2.921	0.004
	R&R → EE	0.166	0.045	3.646	< 0.001
	T&D → EE	0.107	0.043	2.462	0.014

Table VI.
Results of the structural path model of indirect effects

Notes: EE, employee engagement; PF, performance feedback; JS, job security; CA, career advancement; T&D, training and development; R&R, rewards and recognition; EP, employee participation; OC, organizational commitment

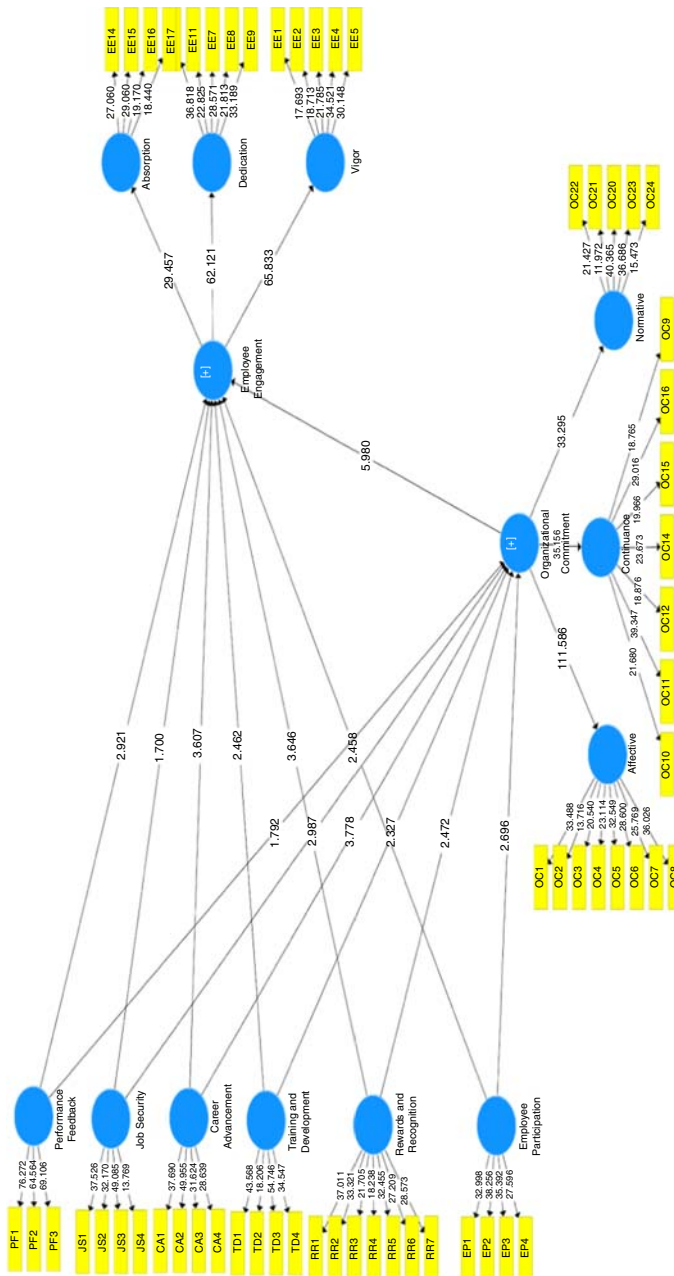


Figure 3. PLS-SEM bootstrapping indirect relationship (mediating relationship)

significant at the 0.05 significance level though it is partially mediated as the VAF value (VAF = 36.85 percent) is less than 80 percent (partially supporting *H2c*). Finally, the TD→OC→EE relationship ($\beta = 0.042, p < 0.05$) is also partially mediated (partially supporting *H2f*) with a VAF value of 28.06 percent. However, there is no mediation found for PF→OC→EE relationship ($\beta = 0.030, p < 0.10$) though the link is significant, it carries a VAF value of 19.85 percent that is less than 20 percent (*H2d*, not supported). Similarly, OC cannot mediate relationship between rewards and recognition and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.041, p < 0.05$) in spite of having a significant linkage, the VAF value (VAF = 19.655) (*H2e*, not supported) does not attain the threshold value for mediation. In brief, among all the six indirect paths, only four relationships namely, between career advancement, employee participation, job security, training and development and employee engagement are partially mediated through OC. The other two relationships between performance feedback, rewards and recognition and employee engagement are not found to have mediation effect.

5. Discussion

In regard to a crucial need of research to investigate the relationship between HRM practices, OC and employee engagement in the context of banking employees, results reveal that all the HRM practices are significant predictors of employee engagement. In fact, all the six HRM practices perceived by banking employees inspired them to engage more in performing their role. This study finding is in line with the suggestions of Chen (2017) Van De Voorde and Beijer (2015) and Alias *et al.* (2014) that HRM practices can positively improve the level of employee engagement if adequately introduced and properly managed. In addition, it suggests that HRM practices need to be prioritized and be provided adequate focus by the management to boost employee engagement. Findings support that if banks introduce a proper HRM system for their employees, they feel that their organizations are concerned about their well-being that make them more engaged at their work. In general, findings of this study are in line with SET (Blau, 1986) suggesting that the reciprocal social exchange relationships can be generated between two different parties (i.e. employer and employee) within the organizations. HRM practices, therefore, work as a social exchange instruments introduced by the organizations to motivate their employees in a positive way and provide them socio-economic and emotional resources (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) which, in turn, makes feel employees obliged and more engaged toward their job in a kind of repayment. Moreover, this study results find a partial support for mediation effect of OC on the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement. More specifically, among the six hypothesized relationships of HRM practices and employee engagement, only four relationships are partially mediated by OC. In addition, other two relationships between HRM practices (namely, performance feedback and rewards and recognition) and employee engagement are not mediated by OC. Though several studies (e.g. Huang *et al.*, 2017;

Relationships	Path a x b	SE	t-value	p-value	VAF	Decision
CA → OC → EE	0.056	0.017	3.345	0.001	23.477	Partially mediation
EP → OC → EE	0.039	0.017	2.324	0.021	25.959	Partially mediation
JS → OC → EE	0.042	0.017	2.423	0.016	36.852	Partially mediation
PF → OC → EE	0.030	0.018	1.654	0.099	19.847	No mediation
R&R → OC → EE	0.041	0.018	2.299	0.022	19.655	No mediation
T&D → OC → EE	0.042	0.019	2.200	0.028	28.060	Partially mediation

Table VII.
Results of mediation test of organizational commitment

Notes: EE, employee engagement; PF, performance feedback; JS, job security; CA, career advancement; T&D, training and development; R&R, rewards and recognition; EP, employee participation; OC, organizational commitment

Karatepe, 2013; Tang and Tang, 2012) suggest that HRM practices and employee performance relationship works through a mechanism called black-box stage, this study identifies a strong direct relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement rather an indirect relationship. Results indicate that HRM practices not necessarily always follow the black-box stage of indirect effect on employee behavior such as employee engagement rather they themselves have the significant direct relationship with employee engagement. This study, thus, partially validates the black-box stage as the direct relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement is very high, and these relationships are slightly absorbed after including the mediator OC.

6. Implications

Regarding the theoretical contribution, this research provides additional empirical literature in the field of organizational behavior, HRM development and employee engagement. Specifically, this study developed a model to explain the relationship between individual HRM practices and employee engagement. Previous studies (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2015; Menguc *et al.*, 2013; Azoury *et al.*, 2013; Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Bal *et al.*, 2013) emphasized on a bundle of HRM practices to predict employee engagement rather to focus on the role of individual HRM practices in enhancing employee engagement. While very few studies (Sharma and Sharma, 2010; Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010) considered individual HRM practices to predict employee engagement treating OC and employee engagement as a same construct, this research theoretically provides an additional knowledge regarding the predictors of employee engagement by demonstrating that all the six HRM practices, namely, career advancement, employee participation, job security, performance feedback, rewards and recognition, training and development, are highly significant predictors of employee engagement. The study findings further extend the knowledge of understanding regarding the black-box stage on the relationship suggesting that if the direct relationship between independent and dependent variable is weak, only then mediator variable can play an important role to explain the black-box stage.

Moreover, these results help bank policy makers to design their HRM policies recommending that HRM practices are significant catalyst to make banking employees' more energetic, dedicated and enthusiastic during their role performance, and, thus, HRM practices need to be prioritized in the banks.

The organizational success and significance depends on the performance excellence of employees by developing and adopting new approaches, techniques and skills. Organizations should exert efforts and nurture human capital to foster its commitment and engagement conduct. Moreover, OC involves the emotional attachment of employees to an organization, it provides them the confidence to ask for necessary resources and exert energy toward their jobs, which, in turn, improves the level of employees' well-being (Zayas-Ortiz *et al.*, 2015). The findings of this study allow creating leaders who can develop the attributes to contribute in the organizational achievement through a process within a very challenging global environment. Furthermore, these individuals might affect the organizations and the community at large, building a good moral to enhance the quality of life in their society.

7. Limitations and future research

Though this research has several theoretical and managerial contributions, it, likewise other empirical research, also suffers from some limitations that need to be addressed. However, these limitations might be considered for the ground of future research, but still findings of this study need to be interpreted by taking into consideration of these flaws. First, this study applies a cross-sectional method by which data have been collected at once during the research period (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Such types of methods do not allow

researcher to establish a causal relationship among the key study variables. Cross-sectional approach, unlike the longitudinal or experimental research design, cannot measure the significant change in key variables over the time, which makes it inappropriate in causal studies (Cohen *et al.*, 2013).

Another apparent drawback is that as this study only focuses on six HRM practices as the major predictors of employee engagement, this study incorporates only one part of organizational factors to explain the variances of employee engagement. However, other factors might also be able to explain the variances of employee engagement significantly. In this regard, the future research may include other potential antecedents of employee engagement such as organizational culture, leadership traits, organizational politics, etc., and extend the present framework that may enhance the percentage of explained variances.

8. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the factors that might have the association with banking sector employees' engagement. The main purpose of this study is to explore the role of HRM practices on employee engagement based on SET. It also includes the mediating role of OC on employee engagement in the context of banking sector employees in Bangladesh. This study makes contributions by extending the existing literature based on the relationships among HRM practices, OC and employee engagement. Although very few studies have examined the role of specific HRM practices on employee engagement, this study extends the existing literature by tackling the identified research gaps through integrating OC as a mediating variable that explains the reasons of why and how HRM practices and employee engagement relationship works. Conclusively, despite having of mixed results, however, this study manages to provide support for the application of SET, in which all the HRM practices have direct significant relationships with employee engagement and also able to generate positive employee attitudes toward the organization (OC) that subsequently affects employee engagement.

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