

CREATING SUSTAINABLE HIGH-PERFORMANCE HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICE THROUGH EMPLOYEES LEARNING AGILITY: THE TRANSITION ADAPTIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic posed enormous challenges, compelling organizations to adapt to unforeseen events as a result of direct immediate threats and consequently pushing human resource practitioners to reshape their existing human resources practices. It appears, there is no study so far which has investigated the relationship between employee learning agility (ELA) and high-performance human resources practice (HPHRP) particularly, the mediating effect of the person-organization fit (P-O fit) in reshaping human resource practices through transition adaptive theory. A self-administered survey among public sector employees in the Fiji Islands yielded a sample of 351 participants. The proposed model was analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM), to determine the model fit. The findings show that ELA significantly enhances HPHRP. This suggests that learning opportunity provides an opportunity to adopt, modify, and recombine, the current knowledge with new knowledge in creating new knowledge stock. The diffusion of such knowledge can assist significantly in improving human resource practices. Moreover, the mediating effect of P-O fit shows the congruence between ELA and organization, further suggesting that employees perform best in an environment that supports their salient needs and recognizes their knowledge, abilities, and skills in reshaping human resources practices. As such, this study provides a significant contribution to the extant literature on human resource management. Finally, the current research offers theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and further research directions.

Keywords: Employees learning agility, high-performance human resource practice, P-O fit, transition adaptive approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to organizations in many ways, such as necessitating technological changes and changes in labor practice, creating a high level of complexity together with a plethora of conflicting views. The pandemic compelled human resource practitioners to find ingenious solutions for sustainable organizational performance and help to employees cope with unprecedented situations. Studies show that organizations around the globe went through considerable transformation (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). It is suggested that reshaping the existing practice can also be made possible through employees' learning agility. In short, the employees of today and tomorrow must be more agile. They must be resourceful to face the changes, and above all they must be able to learn from experience. Employees learning agility (hereafter referred to as ELA) has been postulated as the willingness and ability to learn from the past, mastering new ideas to derive new results under difficult conditions (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; De Meuse et al., 2011). Similarly, Gravett & Caldwell (2016) also defined learning agility as a connection between employee adaptability and readiness to take on challenges in uncharted territory. ELA becomes a fascinating topic to study for several reasons: First, employees with learning agility are confident to analyze complex situations and are ready to make connections (Zimmerling & Chen, 2021). Second, a new environment once created for success is insufficient for endless success (Joiner, 2009). Accordingly, there is an increasing realization that employees learning agility is on a continuum as a competency that can counter effectively and efficiently to uncertainty in the contemporary business world (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Third, the escalation in the level of past knowledge, skills, and experience is a significant factor for improvement in the organization (Tsendsuren et al., 2021). Therefore, it becomes an

increasingly vital phenomenon to investigate how ELA can also assist human resource practitioners to reshape human resource practice.

A handful of literature has examined the conceptual network of variables connected to learning agility. Prior works of literature highlighted that employees' with willingness to learn from experience have greater potential for promotion (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; Eichinger et al., 2001), long-term investment, work commitment (Amagoh, 2009), high job involvement, reduced turnover intentions (Shih et al., 2011), are more likely to identify with their organizations early (Dries et al., 2012), have increased innovativeness, productivity, and performance (Tripathi et al., 2020), and manage change through innovative ideas (Tripathi & Dhir, 2022). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between employees' learning agility, high-performance human resource practices, and person-organization fit in the context of public sector organizations. Having identified this research gap, this study attempts to address it by examining how employees with learning agility can also reshape current human resource practice which is considered a "coherent practice that enhances the skills of the workforce, participation in decision making, and motivation to put forth discretionary effort" (Appelbaum et al., 2000, p. 26). Furthermore, the study links ELA and HPHRP to Person-Organization Fit as a mediator. According to Krisof (1996), when the characteristics of an individual are congruent with the characteristics of the organization, the individual's behavior and attitude will be influenced by the degree of "fit" between them. As such, this study poses the following important research questions:

RQ1. Does ELA influence HPHRP?

RQ2. Does ELA influence P-O Fit?

The present research aims to address these research questions through transition adaptive theory (TAT) (Schlossberg, 1981) as a theoretical framework which explains the

developmental or behavioral changes that take place before and after employees' exposure to transition events (Bliese et al., 2017). For instance, the recent pandemic has forced employees to transit and adapt to changes in the way they conduct their work. According to TAT, employees adapt and react to diverse life events and transitions as they occur. As argued by Schlossberg (1981, pp. 5), "If an event or nonevent results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world, it requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships". This theory, therefore, is pertinent for studying employees' behavior and experience in times of catastrophe because catastrophic events are likely to trigger a change in employees' abilities, skills, and needs as well as job expectations and requirements (Schlossberg, 1981). In his study, Miles (2013) highlighted that those employees with high learning agility have a higher potential for self-adjustment to market change through past experiences and by honing their ability and skills to grasp something new, and at the same time have a greater propensity for organizational adjustments. Recently, scholars have highlighted that escalation in the level of knowledge fosters discretionary behavior, individual behavior that is not explicitly recognized by any kind of formal rewards (Bliese et al., 2017; Kuntz, 2021). This further consolidates the argument that employees with learning agility have the potential to contribute towards enhancing HPHRP.

Moreover, this study also hypothesizes

that person-organization fit (P-O fit) will mediate the relationship between ELA and HPHRP. To date, few works of literature have shown the mechanism by which the connection is built, however, it is still ambiguous how P-O fit links the relationship between ELA and HPHRP. The findings of prior research showed that P-O fit had a positive and significant link between HPHRP and individual outcomes (Siyal et al., 2020). Similarly, Ahmed (2016) postulated that HPHRP drives a high level of P-O fit which subsequently reduces stress and intentions to quit. These suggest that once a good fit is established, workers respond by exhibiting favorable attitudes, and optimistic and discretionary behavior (Boon et al., 2011; Bright, 2007). However, little attention is given to the mediating mechanism of P-O fit (Bright, 2008; Jyoti et al., 2015), Therefore, another contribution is made to the extant literature regarding P-O fit. The research framework in Figure 1 represents the foundation for this study.

In Figure 1, the findings of the current research reveal that the link between ELA and HPHRP is strengthened by the P-O fit. This suggests that organizational culture, work environment, and congruence between a person and their organization play a significant role in improving existing human resources practice. To successfully manage employees in the future, organizations must carefully align policies and practices based on employees' experiences during times of crisis. Finally, the research concludes by providing theoretical and practical implications.

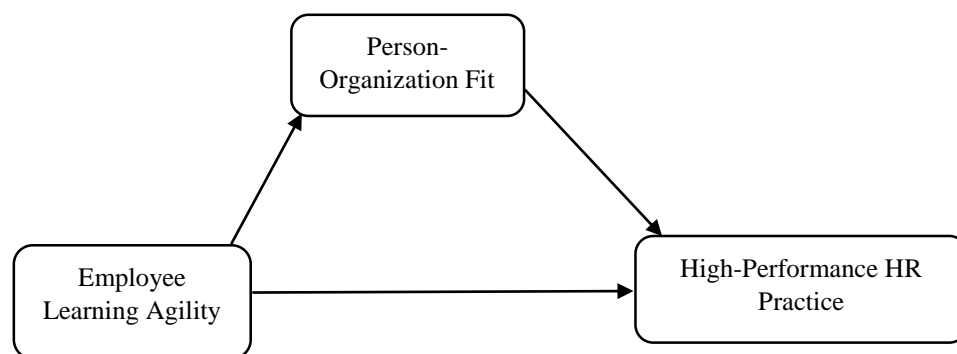


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 ELA and HPHRP

COVID-19 escalated the pressure on organizations to continuously adapt and align their policies and practices for responding effectively and efficiently to ambiguous and uncertain situations, especially in the public sector. It is argued that employees with learning agility have a greater potential to learn new ideas and skills and adapt quickly to changes arbitrarily, such as reshaping HPHRP in achieving organizational goals. In this study, an employee's learning agility is defined as their willingness and capacity to draw lessons from the past and grasp new concepts to provide novel solutions in challenging circumstances (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; De Meuse et al., 2011).

The extant literature postulates ELA as a long-term investment in employee development that improves work commitment (Amagoh, 2009). Similarly, Shih et al., (2011) highlights that employees with high learning agility tend to have high job involvement, reduced turnover intentions, and are better able to cope with organizational changes (Dries et al., 2012, Tripathi & Dhir, 2022). Furthermore, Tripathi and colleagues denoted that ELA enhances levels of productivity, innovativeness, and performance within the organization (Tripathi et al., 2020). Another study demonstrated that employees' willingness to learn from experience and diffusion of knowledge are significantly linked to employees' success, and promotion (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; Eichinger et al., 2001), which ultimately improves HR practice (Scarborough, 2003; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Liao et al., 2009). Furthermore, Nonaka and Takeuchi, (1995) demonstrated that learning opportunities whether inside or outside of the organization, provide opportunities to adopt, modify, or recombine new knowledge in creating new knowledge stock, which is essential for success. While the findings of the above research have made significant contributions, we hope to ascertain that the adoption of

learning agility will enable greater employee identification, achieve strategic goals, and enhance work practice. Based on these findings, it is proposed that ELA has a greater potential to reshape HPHRP and this relationship will be further strengthened by P-O fit.

From the perspective of transition adaptive theory (Schlossberg, 1981), employees react and adapt to diverse life events. As such, a transition occurs when a circumstance results in a change that requires a reciprocal change in one's behavior. Employees continuously provide suggestions, feedback, and new understanding, which can help them adapt to new environments during transition. For instance, researchers have suggested that developmental appraisal is linked to past work experience and together with the acquisition of new competencies (Egan, 2005) can strengthen employee performance, motivate, and develop a creative approach to work (Jianwu et al., 2012; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Similarly, to ensure an effective way to organize work from home for future unprecedented challenges, scholars have suggested that self-managed teams should be autonomous, and accountable, with less or no supervisions, as they will be more motivated to develop new skills and find better ways to respond to changes and challenges (Wageman, 1997; Neal et al., 2005; Wright & Nishii, 2006). Moreover, the adoption of unique employee experiences and raising technological processes can enhance flexibility, problem-solving, creativity, autonomy, and strategy-based innovation (Waheed et al., 2020; Santangelo & Pini, 2011), resulting in improved recruitment, selection, and career paths. Considering these findings, it is suggested that employee learning agility will reshape behavior in achieving HPHRP. As such, the following hypothesis can be drawn from the preceding discussion:

H1: ELA is positively related to HPHRP

2.2. Employee Learning Agility and Person-Organization Fit

Employees with learning agility can

quickly adapt to unfamiliar situations based on experiences (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). They are not afraid of taking risks or challenges and find themselves comfortable in uncomfortable situations. As such, learning agility has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on both the individual and the organizational success (Govuzela & Mafini, 2019). According to scholars, employees with learning agility develop a mindset that encourages them to seek out challenges, solicit feedback, and possess skills that allow them to adjust to a fast-changing work environment (Ragin-Skorecka, 2016; Weber & Tarba, 2014; Winby & Worley, 2014b). These are some of the reasons why organizations intend to retain employees who have established good fit, are optimistic, happy, and exhibit a favorable attitude towards the organization. As such, the congruence between an employee and the organization concerning personal characteristics, values, and goals is known as P-O fit (Jin et al., 2018). In addition, studies have highlighted that employees with accumulated knowledge, skills, and competencies establish high identification with their organizations. Having comparable characteristics, the employees form an alliance with the organization and at the same time share the needs of others (Kristof, 1996; Yli-Renko et al., 2001). Since employees have transited through COVID-19, HR departments must align policies, practices, and procedures that are resilient. Integrating employees' knowledge, experience, and skills, from diverse sources enables promotion, self-development, and job security, achieving organizational goals and objectives through P-O fit (Boon et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2017).

According to the assumptions of the transition adaptive theory (Schlossberg, 1981), old patterns of exercising responsibilities blended with new competencies, lead to the development of new strategies to cope with unforeseen obstacles and opportunities, while those who do not recognize nuance in diverse situations, often fail contemporary predicaments (McCall et al., 1988; Tannenbaum, 1997). This demonstrates that

employees not only use their experiences to strengthen job performance but also improve organizational efficiencies. Thus, an increase in employee satisfaction, commitment, and production shows the congruence between employees and the organization. Bright (2007) argued that P-O fit plucks the congruence between employee characteristics (values, skill, goals) and the organization (culture, resources, goals, values) (Werbel & DeMarie, 2005). Thus, a fit between employees and the organization is important for the creation of organizational identity and to share fundamental characteristics. It is proposed that ELA will significantly affect the P-O fit.

H2: ELA is positively associated with P-O fit.

2.3. Person-Organization Fit and HPHRP

The HPHRP is a set of practices that have the potential to boost organizational performance through workforce development (Souza & Beuren, 2018). The mechanism through which P-O fit reduces turnover (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006), increases teamwork (Posner, 1992), improves organizational citizenship behavior (Cable & DeRue, 2002), and enhances performance (Tziner, 1987), has been well established. However, it is not clear how the connection between P-O fit and HPHRP can be established. It has been highlighted that P-O fit plays a crucial role in maintaining flexibility and commitment among employees, as such qualities are essential in gaining a competitive advantage (Bowen et al., 1991; Kristof, 1996). HPHRP is also interchangeably referred to as involvement in HPHR practice or high commitment (Chiang, et al., 2014; Chang et al., 2014). In our view, when employees identify strongly with an organization, they are more likely to understand and participate in decision-making as well as exert discretionary behaviors. Bailey (1993) emphasized that human resources are often underutilized and when employees form a bonding relationship with the organization, they will elicit discretionary behavior such as

improvement in HR practices. Moreover, Laursen and Hartup (2002) stressed that when employees identify strongly with an organization, they become innovative, and encourage better practice through multi-disciplinary knowledge. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

H3: P-O fit is positively related to HPHRP.

2.4. The Mediating Role of P-O fit between ELA and HPHRP

HPHRP is a system of HR practice designed through employees' knowledge, skills, and commitment, which can become a source of sustainable competitive advantage in the post-pandemic era. Literature has demonstrated a positive correlation between ELA and cost reduction, innovation, and expansion of productivity (Gravett & Caldwell, 2016). Similarly, Datta et al., 2005 highlighted that HPHRP is developed through the combined effects of knowledge acquisition and the development of on-job competencies (Datta et al., 2005). Furthermore, Jones, Jimmieson, and Griffith, (2005) also illustrated that utilization of past competencies resulted in success in adopting changes. Therefore, it is suggested that employees feel confident in incorporating developmental experience into practice when they realize their values align well with those of the organization and will contribute more towards the development of resilient organizational policies. This study fills a research gap by analyzing the mediating role of P-O fit between the ELA and HPHRP.

According to the transition adaptive theory (Schlossberg, 1981), the transition itself is not vital, but it is only important if the transition fits the adaption at every stage. While the transition layout is the framework in which employees' experiences are required for coping with challenges, an unmanaged transition will make adapting to challenges more difficult (Bridges, 2003; Meleis, 2015). As such, new understanding and continuous feedback from employees helps in the adaptation and realization of expectations (Schlossberg, 1981). It is therefore argued

that successful transition requires acquired knowledge and experience, as this can be enhanced through feelings of contentment, and attachment to the organization, resulting in adaptation, adjustment, and engagement, in a meaningful way. According to Swisher et al. (2013), an employee with agility seeks continuous improvement (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000), tends to have a stronger organizational commitment (Shih et al., 2011), is goal-oriented, and curious to form a connection between old and current information in strategizing solutions to ambiguous and complex problems. In a similar vein, Leana and Van Buren (1999) stated that employees with high learning agility see themselves as organizational agents, and often form high-quality exchange relationships with organizations that foster better employment practices. Thus, it is posited:

H4: P-O fit mediates the relationship between ELA and HPHRP.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants and Procedure

In order to test the hypothesis, data were gathered from a sample of 351 employees from the public sector, specifically human resource personnel from the Ministry of Education in the Fiji Islands, utilizing a cross-sectional single self-reported questionnaire. Due to strict COVID protocols and No Jab No Job policies, it was prohibited to enter any public group without a second booster shot. These policies also strictly enforced social distancing practices and allowed for little to no face-to-face interaction. Therefore, HR managers were contacted and provided the research team with a list of email addresses for a total of 1652 employees. The questionnaires were sent to all 1652 employees. Taro Yamane's (1967) simplified formula was used to calculate the appropriate sample size. According to Israel (1992), the difficulty of obtaining a good estimate of population variance has increased the popularity of selecting sample sizes based on proportion. It is likely for this reason that Taro Yamane's

(1967) formula, a simplified formula for proportion, has gained popularity among researchers. A sample size of 322 was calculated using Yamane’s (1967) formula with a 95% confidence interval and a P value of 0.05. This is seen as acceptable. However, a sample of 351 questionnaires was received and recorded with no missing data.

Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Desired sample size

N = Population of the study

e = precision of sampling error (0.05)

The sample comprised 31.5% males and 68.5% females. The details of demographic variables included age, organizational experience, and salary scale as shown in Table 1. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethical clearance committee of Fiji National University.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 1.

3.3. Measures

The participants voluntarily responded to a multi-item five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Employee learning agility was assessed via a self-assessment tool. The instrument consisted of eight items from four order constructs of mental, change, people, and result agility, as suggested by De Meuse et al. (2010). The items were modified from prior studies (Ajzen, 1991; De Meuse et al., 2008;

Venkatesh et al., 2003). Two items were excluded due to low factor loading. The Cronbach’s α was 0.92. Person-Organization Fit consisted of a four-item scale that was adapted and utilized to assess the person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). A sample item for this scale is: “My values and goals are very similar to the values and goals of my organization”, with Cronbach’s α of 0.84. High-performance human resource practice was measured using nine items covering job-related security, training and growth, autonomy, and communication at work. These items were adopted from a 20-item scale from previous research proposed by Kehoe and Wright (2013), and Boon et al. (2011). A sample item is “when my job involves new tasks, I am properly trained” with a Cronbach’s α of 0.89.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Through the validation processes and procedures, the validity and reliability of the three variables were examined. To determine Cronbach’s alpha, the reliability of the three variables was first examined (Table 5). The reliability coefficient was excellent throughout the study, ranging from 0.84 to 0.92. (Nunnally, 1978). Using SPSS and AMOS software, the convergent and discriminant validity was verified and confirmed using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The reliability of each measurement item was outstanding, with the spectrum of the composite reliability ranging from 0.79 to 0.84. (Table 5). In accordance with Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) recommendations, we investigated

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Age	18-24 years	25-31 years	32-38 years	39-45 years	45 years and over
	17.8%	27.9%	23.8%	17.6%	12.9%
Organizational experience	1-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	15 years and over
	21.5%	32.6%	23.8%	11.2%	10.9%
Salary scale	FJD 6,000-12,000	FJD 12,000-18,000	FJD 18,000-24,000	FJD 24,000-30,000	FJD 30,000 and over
	4.9%	14.1%	47.4%	26.5%	7.1%

discriminant validity by determining the average variance extracted (AVE) that was marginally higher than the squared correlation between the components (Table 5). The results demonstrate that every measuring construct was suitable for investigation (Cheung & Lau, 2008). Furthermore, fit indices were evaluated to determine model fit using the structural equation model (SEM). The SEM describes the degree to which the model fits the data. Testing the goodness of fit indices, included chi-square (χ^2), RMSEA, RMR, IFI, CFI, and TLI. The suggested model fit indices of CFI, TLI, and IFI must be greater than 0.80, while RMSEA must be between an astringent range of 0.06 – 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The findings consist of the results shown in Table 3. Finally, conditional process analyses were used to evaluate the mediation effect of the P-O fit (Hayes, 2018).

4.2 Common Method Bias (CMB)

In behavioral research, common method bias (CMB) can be problematic, especially when just one type of data collection is used (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Nevertheless, such potential threats can be alleviated through statistical remedies recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2012). During the process of data collection, the respondent-maintained anonymity, the predictor variable was separated from other observable variables, and individual items and the construction of

wording were given special attention. To eliminate the CMB, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used. According to Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips (1991), the presence of CMB is indicated by a correlation between the measured construct that is greater than 0.90. The study's findings revealed a correlation of 0.79 between the focal constructs (Table 4). Additionally, the standardized regression weight for the proposed research measurement was checked using the common latent factor (CLF), and the variance was minuscule. The analysis statistics show that there is no risk of common method bias. All constructs were reliable and above 0.5 with Cronbach alpha greater than 0.80. According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) also surpass the 0.5 and 0.7 thresholds. Table 5 depicts the CR and AVE results. The mean, standard deviation, and intercorrelation of the measured variables are depicted in Table 5. The acceptable level of discriminant validity can be seen in the results displayed in Table 4, while Table 2 shows further supports of the discriminant validity of the construct.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

While evaluating the hypothesis, the average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and construct validity, were analyzed in accordance with Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Significant factor loading

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations of Variables for the Study

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	2.80	1.28	1						
2. Gender	1.71	0.48	-0.067*	1					
3. Occupation	2.57	1.24	0.627**	-0.164**	1				
4. Salary	3.16	0.92	0.056	0.111***	0.121**	1			
5. ELA	3.90	0.62	0.012	0.007	0.044	0.022	1		
6. HPHRP	3.57	0.63	-0.011	-0.017	0.036	0.066**	0.636**	1	
7. P-O fit	3.56	0.68	-0.008	0.030	0.037	-0.008	0.381**	0.511**	1

Note: *p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

Employee learning agility (ELA), High-performance human resource practice (HPHRP), Person organization fit (P-O fit)

was present in all survey constructs (Table 5). Additionally, the AVE values were higher than the recommended 0.5 cut-off, ranging from 0.53 to 0.55. Cronbach’s alpha values were higher than the benchmark of 0.70, and composite reliability (CR) was above the 0.70 threshold (Fornell & Larcker 1981). The uniqueness of the measured construct was examined using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while analysis of moment structure (AMOS) was used to evaluate chi-square, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis (TLI), and root mean square errors of approximation (RMSEA) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 3 illustrates the proposed model fit summary.

When using cross-sectional data, common method bias can be a significant

problem for the research data. Therefore, based on the findings of Podsakoff et al., (2012), procedural methods and statistical tools were employed to reduce such bias. First, based on procedural methods, predictors were separated from other variables, such as preserving respondent anonymity. Second, a series of CFA was performed to exclude CMB. Based on extant literature any correlations above 0.9 suggest the presence of CMB (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). All correlations were below 0.79.

The correlation results with the measured constructs were as high as 0.79 but did not exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90. In addition, a common latent factor (CFL) was used to examine the standardized regression weights. The findings indicate that the

Table 3 The Model Fit

χ^2	df	RAMSEA	RMR	TLI	IFI	CFI
409.79	149	0.072	0.035	0.934	0.924	0.934

Table 4 Matrix of Cross Loading

Item	ELA	HPHRP	P-O fit
ELA 1	0.778	0.473	0.444
ELA 2	0.761	0.433	0.412
ELA 3	0.786	0.474	0.471
ELA 4	0.715	0.451	0.492
ELA 5	0.745	0.447	0.483
ELA 6	0.771	0.367	0.413
HPHRP 1	0.442	0.485	0.468
HPHRP 2	0.409	0.410	0.415
HPHRP 3	0.463	0.407	0.423
HPHRP 4	0.451	0.436	0.488
HPHRP 5	0.403	0.402	0.439
HPHRP 6	0.472	0.495	0.499
HPHRP 7	0.417	0.427	0.496
HPHRP 8	0.493	0.443	0.443
HPHRP 9	0.400	0.420	0.448
P-O fit 1	0.502	0.549	0.542
P-O fit 2	0.580	0.549	0.534
P-O fit 3	0.572	0.525	0.525
P-O fit 4	0.516	0.532	0.560

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Employee learning agility (ELA), High-performance human resource practice (HPHRP), Person organization fit (P-O fit)

variance is modest (Table 5). In general, data analysis results did not indicate a threat from CMB. Finally, the proposed research framework was analyzed through conditional process analysis (Hayes, 2018).

ELA was first hypothesized to be positively correlated with HPHRP. The results of the analysis (Table 6) showed that ELA was positively correlated with HPHRP ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.001$), fully supporting H1. Similarly, ELA was assumed to be positively correlated with P-O-Fit, the results ($\beta = 0.581, p < 0.001$) show that H2 is fully supported. Third, it was expected that P-O Fit will positively relate to HPHRP. The results ($\beta = 0.454, p < 0.001$) show H3 is fully supported. Finally, P-O-Fit was thought to enhance the relationship between ELA and HPHRP. The corresponding result indicates that P-O-Fit partially mediates the relationship between ELA and HPHRP, with a direct effect of $\beta = 0.261 (p < 0.001)$ and an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.264 (p < 0.001)$. Therefore, H4 is also

fully supported. In summary, the relationships between ELA and HPHRP, ELA and P-O fit, and P-O fit and HPHRP, were all positively significant at a P value less than 0.05, with a significant impact at the 95% confidence interval. The direct effect is 0.261, while the indirect effect is 0.264, and the total effect is 0.525. This indicates that in the presence of the mediating variable, the direct effect is reduced indicating the mediating effect of P-O fit. As such, both a direct effect and indirect effect are significant indicating partial mediation.

5. DISCUSSION

Generally, high-learning agile employees are often motivated to incorporate experience with new knowledge in improving their work performance. Hence this study explored the pristine relationship between ELA and HPHRP in the HRM literature. The study revealed that ELA as a construct helps

Table 5 Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Item	Mean	SD	Item total correlation	Loading	Error	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
ELA 1	3.89	0.696	0.676	0.869	0.029	0.92	0.84	0.53
ELA 2	3.97	0.699	0.708	0.745	0.023			
ELA 3	3.94	0.708	0.724	0.771	0.023			
ELA 4	3.98	0.699	0.794	0.809	0.022			
ELA 5	3.84	0.773	0.738	0.786	0.022			
ELA 6	3.81	0.862	0.728	0.801	0.029			
HPHRP 1	2.87	0.742	0.621	0.745	0.027	0.89	0.79	0.53
HPHRP 2	3.74	0.855	0.669	0.711	0.030			
HPHRP 3	3.65	0.865	0.765	0.748	0.026			
HPHRP 4	3.66	0.777	0.716	0.769	0.032			
HPHRP 5	3.60	0.885	0.789	0.745	0.032			
HPHRP 6	3.71	0.831	0.678	0.789	0.026			
HPHRP 7	3.67	0.885	0.732	0.759	0.032			
HPHRP 8	3.59	0.824	0.718	0.763	0.027			
HPHRP 9	3.68	0.824	0.704	0.746	0.024			
P-O fit 1	3.73	0.759	0.764	0.787	0.056	0.84	0.83	0.55
P-O fit 2	3.68	0.780	0.729	0.731	0.045			
P-O fit 3	3.55	0.838	0.735	0.739	0.032			
P-O fit 4	3.31	0.957	0.656	0.712	0.041			

Employee learning agility (ELA), High-performance human resource practice (HPHRP), Person organization fit (P-O fit)

strengthen HR practices. This study also supports the first hypothesis, which states that learning agility has a favorable impact on HPHRP. This shows that reshaping HR practices and adapting to new methods or tactics for dealing with problems through increased learning agility leads to enhanced work practice. Furthermore, this relationship is also strengthened through the mediating role of P-O fit. The “P-O fit” describes the degree of compatibility or congruence between the features of employees (such as personality traits, skills, objectives, beliefs, values, and interests) and the attributes of organizations (such as culture, values, climate, norms, and goals). The finding shows that P-O fit partially mediates the relationship, suggesting that when employees identify with and stick to the organization, they establish a sense of belongingness. They will be self-motivated and look for every opportunity to provide constructive feedback in improving the workplace. Making the decision to work for the government and having the chance to do so are both necessary for public sector employees. Public sector employees are more likely to be content with their work and have attachments with their organizations if they perceive that their values are aligned with those of the organization. This finding demonstrates that public sector employees with high levels of ELA will have higher levels of organizational commitment when their characteristics are consistent with the

traits of the public organizations.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The current research shows that ELA serves greater potential in creating and improving HPHRP. According to Miles (2013), a changing business environment is anticipated in every worker’s learning agility. As emphasized in this study, the transition adaptive theory makes the best connection between ELA and HPHRP which highlights that an employee’s adaptability at every stage of the transition will create an employee’s readiness to confront the unknown circumstance in the organization. The more employees successfully adapt themselves at every stage of transition, the more they become accustomed to new HR practices. The current research further unfolds that employee learning agility can not only enhance job performance but also foster employees to take an active role in extensive communication, and decision-making processes, as well as feedback during transition stages. Similarly, scholars have highlighted that as employees’ transit from one stage of work to another, the accumulation of knowledge and skills from the transition are significant factors in each staff member’s capacity development, encouraging high performance (Tsenduren et al., 2021; Gravett & Caldwell, 2016). This suggests that employees with greater learning

Table 6 Mediation of P-O fit between ELA and HPHRP

Parameter	Dependent	R ²	F	P	Coefficient	SE	t	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	P-O fit	0.295	27.980	0.000	1.269***	0.248	5.125	0.782	1.756
ELA					0.581***	0.050	11.620	0.483	0.680
Constant	HPHRP	0.446	44.645	0.000	0.944***	0.212	4.460	0.528	1.361
ELA					0.261***	0.049	5.350	0.165	0.357
P-O fit					0.454***	0.045	10.070	0.365	0.542
Direct effect of X to Y					0.261***	0.049	5.350	0.165	0.259
The indirect effect of X to Y					0.264***	0.040		0.188	0.347
The total effect of X to Y					0.525***	0.047	11.174	0.432	0.617

agility are ready to take on challenges This suggests that employees with greater learning agility are ready to take on challenges and figure out ways to get the toughest assignments done. Comparably, Lombardo and Eichinger (2000) also shared similar sentiments stating that highly agile employees are good at managing conflict and providing strategies for improvements.

The research further evaluated the mediating effect of person-organization fit. The results showed that when employees highly associate similarities between themselves and the organization, they create personal space and seek out ways to effectively contribute to the organization's success. During the transition stage, employees who highly identify with the organization tend to adapt quickly to organizational changes (Tripathi et al., 2020; Gravett & Caldwell, 2016), developing new ways to cope with unforeseen problems (Mitchinson & Morris, 2012). Such employees can discover new changes, stimulate innovation, and provide a quick response to changes (Lin & Huang, 2020). In addition, these employees can take on broad roles and responsibilities and swiftly adapt to daily business routines (Ybema et al., 2020; Romain & Agogu , 2021). Moreover, when employees are fully aware of their obligations, they take active participation in assisting the organization through careful strategies in its human resource practice. The transition adaptive theory emphasizes that employees in transition often feel incompetent due to unforeseen circumstances. Yet, the move from being incompetent to competent is difficult. Employees, therefore, must be competent to adapt to new situations (Schlossberg & Warren, 1985). When employees identify themselves as part of a social group, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging, and will be able to adjust their behavior toward organizational success (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Zhou & Georg, 2001). It can be further concluded that the mediating role of P-O fit between ELA and HPHRP is another major contribution towards transition adaption theory. In

summary, the transition adaption theory can be used to justify how ELA contributes towards HPHRP in the transition towards post COVID.

5.2. Practical Implications

Following COVID-19's pernicious effect on organizations around the globe, the current research illustrates the importance of ELA in enhancing HPHRP during unforeseen circumstances. According to Caligiuri et al., (2020), approximately 20% of the organization was prepared for such an unprecedented situation. Because COVID-19 is regarded as a people-based crisis, the HR department must create more resilient practices. Considering this, the current research unfolds that ELA is a critical construct in creating sustainable HPHRP in the following ways: First, to create HPHRP through ELA, the HR department is required to put greater emphasis on creating a learning organization. For instance, employees with learning agility can easily cope with noble changes and through discussion, swiftly bringing in innovative and creative ideas to produce unique solutions. A study by McGuire et al., (2021) affirmed that applying employee knowledge and experience is a crucial factor for organizational performance and increased productivity (Ybema et al., 2020; Shih et al., 2011). In addition, the relationship between ELA and HPHRP through P-O fit can also foster greater development of a high-quality exchange relationship between employee and organization. A study by Blau (1964) stated that when employees are afforded favorable treatment from employers, they will position themselves to make a greater contribution toward innovation. Second, the HR department should place greater emphasis on information seeking, seeking feedback, experimentation, and reflection. This provides employees with an opportunity to analyze complex situations and be ready to make connections. Scholars have highlighted that highly agile employees can execute new tasks in unprecedented situations and at the

same time solve challenging problems (Smith & Bititci, 2017; Gravett & Caldwell, 2016). Finally, the remoteness of working from home during COVID-19 has put an enormous challenge on HR to upgrade technology to execute best HR practices. Miles (2013) postulated that effectively managing and implementing technology upgradation, requires an agile learning labor force that can deal with changes successfully.

5.3 Limitation and Future Research Direction

Although this work contributes significantly to the existing literature, there remain certain limitations. Firstly, data were collected using only quantitative methods. It is suggested that future studies extend this research by collecting data using ethnographic techniques such as field studies, unstructured interviews, and case studies. Secondly, the current study was based on cross-sectional data that did not allow causal inference. Future research may collate the causality between variables with either controlled experiments or longitudinal studies. Thirdly, employee learning agility should be encouraged in the organization. As emphasized by Mikulincer et al., (2009), organizational encouragement is a major motivator, superior to financial and in-kind incentives. It is noted that any positive complement to employees encourages them to be more effective. According to Yukl (2012) when an organization actively encourages and recognizes employee effort, its impact on the improvement of business outcomes is twelve times stronger. Hence, future research may investigate how encouragement and praise could further develop ELA. Finally, the findings of the current study can be subject to debate regarding the appropriateness of generalization and caution in generalization, as sample data were collected only from the Fiji Islands. The difference in the development of HRM practices in other countries could impact the findings. Future studies should be carefully designed using

longitudinal methods to confirm causal relationships between variables and extend the findings.

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