

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY HUMAN RESOURCE ROLES IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: *In the mist of the changing global corporate scenario, the role of human resource executives undertakes a major shift. This study adopts Ulrich (1997) proposed model, a set of contemporary roles, which focus on the shifts from traditional to business partnering human resource management activities. The four roles are strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent. To understand these roles, respondents from Malaysian organizations are identified to explain these roles. In this regard, a questionnaire was developed from reliable scales. A data set of 218 respondents was collected. Regression Analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The key results of the study indicated that human resource is perceived to play all four proposed roles in Malaysian organizations. Innate prejudice in the perceptions of the human resource professionals and non-human resource executives concerning the role played by human resource professionals in these organizations have also been found in this study.*

This study indicate that human resource skills and competencies have positive influence on human resource roles, thereby positioning itself at competitive advantage, organizations should focus on improving human resource skills and competencies. The limitations of the study have been discussed, and future recommendations have also been provided to further the knowledge in the field.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite much academic work and the development of multiple typologies to describe the true role of human resource professionals [16,21,23], we are still confounded with the role of human resource professionals in an organization [4,24]. The role that human resource professionals should play in the effective management of the employment relationship has remained a controversial subject among scholars¹⁸. Combined with a decreasing ratio of human resource professionals to employees, human resource professionals are subjected to vast changes in their need to demonstrate the added value of the human resource function to the organization. In delivering human resource management services, human resource professionals meet high expectations and in many organizations, the human resource function has been engaged in nothing less than reinventing itself. Accordingly, human resource professionals are no longer the “employees’ specialists” in a distinct extent that delivers traditional human resource services. In this ever-changing human resource environment, human resource professionals must be competent in a number of different areas including at strategic level decision-making processes. Human resource professionals are well positioned to exercise strategic leadership and contribute significantly to a firm’s competitive advantage as they have the understanding of the human resource performance. This paradigm shift in the value of human resource has created opportunities for this function to develop to a more strategic role in an organization’s operations [15].

To be competitive in the ever-changing business environment, organizations need to adjust accordingly. Moreover, organizations are being notified that re-engineering, right measuring, and even brilliant intervention is the key to business achievement in the present age [11,17]. Pinola [20] offers us some valuable lists of the tasks that current Chief Executive Officers should expect from human resource professionals. Few of the essential tasks pointed out

are the human resource professionals are expected to develop an awareness and understanding of the business so that they may earn the right to seat at the top of the company with board of directors. Apart from that, human resource professionals are required to take an active role in major change initiatives such as strategic planning, reorganizing and system implementation.

To attain the competitive edge over competitors, organizations require unique competitiveness which cannot be easily replicated by others. The distinct nature of human resource makes it inimitable thus gives a competitive edge to the organizations. Therefore, organizations should focus on human resource management practices, and there is a need to have a more detailed examination of the human resource roles within the organization.

Human resource is required a vital and guiding role in allowing a company to select its people well, capitalize them with suitable errands, support their progress and respect their needs in order to achieve an organizations’ strategic business objectives. Gómez-Mejía [10] stated that this demanded role requires competence in human resource professionals that will create and sustain a flexible and adaptive workforce.

The human resource role is framed by the wider scholastic and practitioner context. The rise of human resource management and the changing nature of human resource work have uncovered practitioners to new demands and professional challenges, and many different typologies have been recommended to capture such changes. Worldwide socio-economic developments, such a economic process, changes in personnel demographics, increasing speed within the service sector of the economy, specialize in customer loyalty and stress on effective monetary performance, challenge the human resource operate in its role because the creator of another price to the organization [3]

The field of Human Resource Management has become essential in managing the competitive astute of the organization. The organization’s competitive advantage lies in the notion that intellectual skills of human resource

managers to understand the performance of human, and practicing strategic leadership contribute fundamentally in the process. This will aid and induce open doors for the human resource ability to play a significant role in a company's operation [15].

Apart from studies conducted on human resource roles within the west since mid-1990s, there's a growing have to be compelled to verify the readiness of the human resource professionals to play additional strategic roles particularly within the context of Asia [2,,5,14]. In the Malaysian context, hardly few studies have been carried to address this issue. Othman & Ismail [19] a decade ago, conducted research to unveil the human resource roles and practices, in which they found that human resource practices are not distinctly related to the success of the organization. The results showed that human resource practices tend to target the shape of the work descriptions and choice strategies employed by the organization. The results indicate that human resource professionals are just acting the role as associate administrative professional and not as a strategic partner. In this regard, Lawler III & A.Mohrman [15] contended that the organizations have not fully adopted new human resource roles. In the Malaysian context, there is a gap in the research on new human resource roles as proposed by Ulrich [23] in his study on human resource transformation. The objective of this study is conduct to assess the employees' perceived role of the human resource professionals in the context of Malaysian business scenario in the new millennium. Firstly, the real examples of all four roles are identified in Malaysian organizations. Secondly, the study aims to compare perceived role that human resource functions plays in the Multinational companies, Small medium enterprises, local Malaysian companies and government sector as all these four sectors have unique business propositions which require the human resource management to play an active role. Lastly, this study also aims to associate the perceptions of human resource professionals and other professionals in relation to the four roles of human resource management for the above mentioned four sectors to test whether human resource professionals have a realistic assessment of its role in the organization.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Theoretical Framework

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate employees' perception of human resource roles and to examine the relationship between satisfaction with human resource skills and competencies and human resource roles in the context of multi-national companies, small, medium enterprises, local Malaysian companies and Government sector organizations in Malaysia. Based on the review of past literature, a conceptual model was developed as follows:

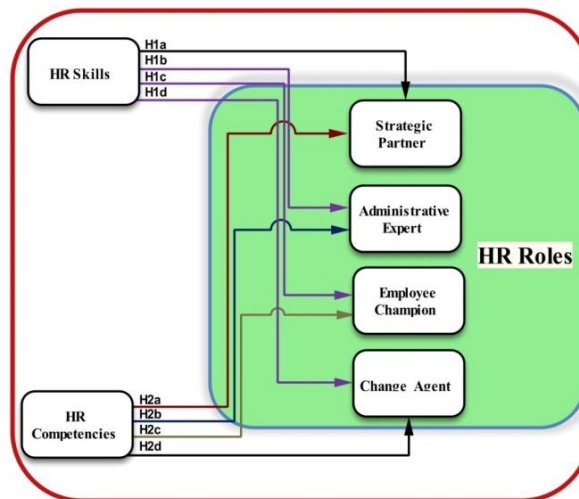


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model

Hypotheses Development

To be productive and successful, considerable research has been conducted to examine what knowledge, skills, and behaviors are required for human resource professionals in their organizational roles. In the 1980s Ulrich began a longitudinal study of human resource competencies, which continues today [22-24,26,27]. The studies conducted by these researchers contended that the lack of human resource competence is a serious issue. Wright, Stewart, and Moore [29] in their study indicated that chief human resource officers consider this lack of competencies the main reason for not meeting the objectives of their chief executive officers. Indeed, "only 36% of the CHROs studied were hired from within, indicating that the organization mostly agrees with the lack of human resource competence internally". The competencies required by human resource professionals these days and within the future, square measure each specific to human resource and broad regarding leadership, management, and behaviors. initial and foremost, somebody's resource skilled should possess technical human resource knowledge. In a sense, this is often the value of entry to the profession. Understanding and skill to effectively observe employee and labor relations, compensation and advantages, coaching and development, work force designing and employment, risk management and strategic management, further as possessing knowledge of human resource technology, square measure all foundational to success in human resource [7].

Hence, this study attempts to understand the human resource roles and the impact of human resource skills and competencies on new roles proposed by Ulrich [23]. To understand the relationship between perceived human resource roles and human resource skills and competencies, these following hypotheses are developed:

Hypotheses 1 (a): Human resource skills positively influence human resource strategic partner role.

Hypotheses 1 (b): Human resource skills positively influence human resource administrative expert role.

Hypotheses 1 (c): Human resource skills positively influence human resource employee champion role.

Hypotheses 1 (d): Human resource skills positively influence human resource change agent role.

Hypotheses 2 (a): Human resource competencies are positively related to the human resource strategic partner role.

Hypotheses 2 (b): Human resource competencies are positively related to the human resource administrative expert role.

Hypotheses 2 (c): Human resource competencies are positively related to the human resource employee champion role.

Hypotheses 2 (d): Human resource competencies are positively related with human resource change agent role.

Methods

The objective of this study was to examine the employee’s perception of human resource roles in the Malaysian context. A total number of 218 respondents from the employees working in multinational companies, private limited companies, small medium enterprises and government sector in Malaysia participated in this study. Out of 218 data sets, missing value entries were removed and remaining 197 data sets were included in the study. Data was collected using paper-based and online-mediated questionnaires which were shared personally and through emails. The questionnaire was designed using reliable multi-item scales developed in previous research and consisted of four sections. Stratified convenience sampling technique was adopted to collect data from the sample respondents of employees working in Malaysian organizations, where the convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents from each stratum. Data obtained was then analyzed using SPSS version 23. Once the reliabilities of the multi-item scales in the questionnaire were established, factor analysis was performed to simplify the data, and multiple regression analysis was then carried out to examine the relationship between the variables human resource skills, human resource competencies and human resource roles.

As shown in Table 1, the largest single age group (33%) was in the “25-34” category which comprised of a majority of female respondents, whereas the second largest group (30.45) was also in the same category of “25-34” which consisting of majority male respondents. Besides, it had been observed that only two respondents fall under the age group of “45-60,” which was evenly divided by gender.

Regarding position job level, the largest single age group (31.47%) was in the “25-34” category which comprised of “Junior Executive” position, followed by “Senior Executive” (13.70%) position also in the “25-34.” It had been observed that only one respondent falls under “Manager” and “Senior Executive” positions in the age group “45-60” respectively. Furthermore, the respondents with more than one year to 5

years’ experience were slightly more than half of the respondents and that this group of respondents mainly comprised (40%) of those who aged 25-34 years. 17.76% of the respondents had the working experience of less than one year.

3. RESULTS

Demographic profile of participants

Table 1: Profile of Respondents (N= 197)

Variable	Description	Age Group				(%)
		Bel ow 25	25- 34	35- 44	45- 60	
Gender	Male	14	60	25	1	50.76
	Female	6	65	25	1	49.24
	Total	20	125	50	2	100
Job Position level	Manager	2	17	26	1	24.19
	Senior Executive	1	27	21	1	24.65
	Junior Executive	6	62	3	0	37.21
	Assistant	11	19	0	0	13.95
	Total	20	125	50	2	100
	Tenure of Service	Less than 1 Year	7	21	7	0
1-5 Years		13	79	15	1	54.82
More than 5 Years		0	25	28	1	27.41
Total		20	125	50	2	100

Table 2: Survey Sample Industry Sector by Age group (N= 197)

Organization type/ Sector	Age Group				(%)
	Below 25	25-34	35-44	35-60	
Multi- National Companies	8	40	5	0	26.90
Private Limited Companies	4	37	11	1	26.90
Small Medium Enterprise	7	11	7	0	12.69
Government Sector	1	37	27	1	33.50
Total	20	125	50	2	100

As shown in Table 2, the respondents were distributed into four sectors which are Multinational companies, Private limited companies, Small, medium enterprise, and Government sector. The largest group of respondents was from Government sector consisting 33.50% with (18.78%) fall under the age group of “25-34”. Further, it had been observed that the largest single age group (20.30%) was in the age group “25-34” which comprised of respondents from Multinational companies. While from the Small, medium enterprise, the number of respondents was the lowest with the percentage of 12.69% only.

Table 3: Survey Sample Functional Area by Age Group (N=197)

Functional Area	Age Group				(%)
	Below 25	25-34	35-44	35-60	
HR	7	23	8	0	19.28
Non-HR	13	102	42	2	80.71
Total	20	125	50	2	100.00

As illustrated in the table above, the largest group of respondents falls under the section of Non-HR, which was mainly comprised (51.77%) under the age group “25-34” followed by age group “35-44” which involved (21,31%) non-HR respondents. It had also been observed that the majority of the sample respondents fall under the age group “25-34” and “35-44.”

Validity Test: Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted to reduce all the variable items in this study into smaller sets of the underlying dimensions. Only variables with factor loading above 0.5 were extracted for interpretation. The construct validity could be verified by comparing the extracted factors with the findings from prior research. Before this, KMO test and Bartlett’s test were conducted to determine the suitability of respondent data for factor analysis. The SPSS output for both tests was shown in Table 4.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett’s Test (SPSS Output)

KMO and Bartlett's Test				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.				.946
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square			7110.273
	df			595
	Sig.			.000

As revealed in the table, the KMO test reported a value of 0.946 and Bartlett’s test reported a significant value of 0.000. Both test results had passed the rules of thumb (e.g. >0.5 for KMO test and p<.05 for Bartlett’s test) as provided by Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray, and Cozens [13] and Williams, Brown, and Onsmann [28]. Therefore, the data were considered appropriate for factor analysis. Further, factor analysis was subsequently conducted for human resource skills, human resource competencies, and human resource roles. As recommended by Costello and Osborne⁷, “Direct Oblimin” oblique rotation was set as the rotation method in the factor analysis of this study because correlation among factors was often expected in social science research. Thus, it could produce a more accurate and reproducible solution as compared to orthogonal rotations⁷.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation is Converged in 5 Iterations.

Table 5: Factor Analysis of all Variables (SPSS Output)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
HRS1	.816					
HRS2	.783					
HRS3	.780					
HRS4	.700					
HRC1		.893				
HRC2		.864				
HRC3		.784				
SP6			.854			
SP4			.820			
SP2			.810			
SP5			.805			
SP3			.796			
SP7			.788			
SP1			.709			
CA5				.780		
CA3				.762		
CA4				.758		
CA1				.672		
CA2				.648		
AE3					.855	
AE2					.834	
AE6					.657	
AE5					.576	
EC3						.814
EC2						.784
EC1						.717
EC4						.571

To measure the validity of scales used in the questionnaire, factor analysis has been performed before testing the proposed hypotheses. The results of factor analysis are represented in Table 5. It can be revealed from the data, that all statements of variables used for the statistical analysis, load on the intended factor. Examples are the four dimensions of the construct ‘human resource skills’. For example, the first statement of every dimension has a factor loading of 0.854, the second 0.780, the third 0.85 and the fourth 0.81. The significance of factor loadings is dependent on the sample size used for the analysis. Because, around 197 data sets have been used in this work, factor loadings lower than 0.5 have been excluded. Even though all statements load on the intended factor, the factor loadings of the ‘human resource change agent role’ variable are comparatively quite low.

Additionally, factor analysis resulted in a separate factor for the entire sample. Results indicate that the respondents perceived differentiated human resource roles rather than viewing the roles undifferentiated as one role. Thus, the factor was given the generic name ‘new human resource roles’ instead of combining it with one particular role.

Reliability Analysis

Before testing the hypothesis, a reliability analysis was performed on the multi-item scale using the SPSS software.

The purpose of this analysis was to ensure the internal consistency of the items used in the study questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha was computed to measure the reliabilities of the scales, where a scale considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha value is above 0.70 [8]

Table 6: Reliability Test on Scales

	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Human Resource Skills	0.838	4
Human Resource Competencies	0.900	3
Human Resource Strategic Partner	0.926	7
Human Resource Administrative Expert	0.784	4
Human Resource Employee Champion	0.729	4
Human Resource Change Agent	0.796	5
Total		27

Table 6 shows the reliability scores for each of the scales used in the questionnaire. The results report the Cronbach's Alpha for the individual variables of human resource skills at 0.838, human resource competencies at 0.900, a human resource strategic partner at 0.926, a human resource administrative expert at 0.784, human resource employee champion at 0.729, and human resource change agent at 0.796. Since their reliability values range from 0.72 to 0.92, they all fall well above the acceptable level of 0.70. Therefore, it can be concluded that the scales used in this study have high reliability and internal consistency in measuring the variables concerned. All the measurement items were included in the reliability analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis of the study, multiple regression analysis was conducted on the data. Multiple regressions predict the relationship between the variables by providing a model for calculating the value of the dependent variable based on the independent one. Using SPSS, the multiple regression analysis generated several output tables, such as Descriptive Statistics, Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients; that were used to interpret the findings of this study.

Eight hypotheses had been postulated to examine the relationship between human resource skills, human resource competencies, and human resource roles. The proposed conceptual framework model and analysis tools used were provided as a reference point for result interpretations:

First, support was found for Hypothesis 1(a), that human resource skills had a positive influence on the human resource strategic partner role. As illustrated in the table, the regression model reached high statistical significance (F= 96.698; p<0.001), meaning that human resource skills (independent variable) significantly explained human resource strategic partner role in Malaysia (dependent variable).

Table 7: Test Results for H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d, H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d

Hypothesis	ANOVA		Model Summary		Pearson Correlation
	F test	Sig	R	R ²	
H1a:	96.698	0.000	0.576	0.332	0.576
H1b:	26.248	0.000	0.345	0.119	0.345
H1c:	12.770	0.000	0.248	0.061	0.248
H1d:	14.017	0.000	0.259	0.067	0.259
H2a:	208.025	0.000	0.718	0.516	0.718
H2b:	61.336	0.000	0.489	0.239	0.489
H2c:	6.206	0.014	0.176	0.031	0.176
H2d:	23.773	0.000	0.330	0.109	0.330

With reference to the thumb rule provided by Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs [19], the correlation coefficient (R value) of 0.576 indicated a moderate uphill which means there is a positive relationship between the two variables, whereas the coefficient of determination (R² value) of 0.332 indicated 33.2% of the variance in human resource strategic partner role could be explained by the human resource skills construct. A Pearson Correlation of 0.576 indicated a positive slope in the regression model, which in turn reflected a positive relationship between the two variables. The result of this test supports a positive relationship between human resource skills and human resource strategic partner role was consistent with the previous research. Support has also been found for Hypothesis 1(b), that human resource skills have a positive influence on the human resource administrative expert role. Similar to the regression model for H1(a), the regression model for H1(b) was statistically highly significance (p<0.001). Thus, human resource skills (independent variable) significantly explained human resource administrative expert role in Malaysia (dependent variable). The correlation coefficient (R value) of 0.345 indicated a moderate uphill which means there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Whereas the coefficient of determination (R² value) of 0.119 indicated a positive slope in the regression model, which in turn reflected a positive relationship between human resource skills and human resource administrative expert role. Support had also been found for Hypothesis 1(c) as well; that human resource skills had a positive influence on the human resource employee champion role. Since the significance P-value was less than 0.05, the regression model for H1(c) was deemed statistically significant. Human resource skills (independent variable) have a significant effect on a human resource employee champion role in Malaysia (dependent variable). The correlation coefficient (R value) of 0.248 indicated a moderate uphill which means there is a positive relationship between the two variables, whereas the coefficient of determination (R² value) of 0.061 indicated 28.4% of the variance in the human resource employee champion role could be explained by the human resource

skills construct. A Pearson's correlation of 0.248 showed a positive slope in the regression model. Hence, there was a positive relationship between human resource skills and human resource employee champion role. In line with H1(c), support had also been found for Hypothesis H1(d), that human resource skills had a positive influence on human resource change agent role. Similar to the regression model for H1(c), the regression model for H1(d) was statistically highly significance ($p < 0.001$). Thus, human resource skills (independent variable) significantly explained human resource change agent role in Malaysia (dependent variable). The correlation coefficient (R value) of 0.259 indicated a moderate uphill which means there is a positive relationship between the two variables, whereas the coefficient of determination (R^2 value) of 0.067 indicated a positive slope in the regression model. This positive slope reflects a positive relationship between human resource skills and human resource change agent role. Support had been found for Hypothesis 2(a), that human resource competencies had a positive influence on the human resource strategic partner role. The regression model reached high statistical significance ($F = 208.025$; $p < 0.001$), meaning that human resource competencies (independent variable) significantly explained human resource strategic partner role in Malaysia (dependent variable). Hypothesis 2(b) has also been supported; that human resource competencies had a positive influence on the human resource administrative expert role. Similar to the regression model for H2(a), the regression model for H2(b) was statistically highly significance ($p < 0.001$). Thus, human resource competencies (independent variable) significantly explained human resource administrative expert role in Malaysia (dependent variable). Hypothesis 2(c) was also tested using regression analysis similar to H2(b), where human resource competencies were entered as the independent variable and the human resource employee champion role was entered as the dependent variable. The support had been found; that human resource competencies had a positive influence on the human resource employee champion role. Since the P-value was less than 0.05, the regression model for H2(c) was deemed statistically significant. Last but not the least, in line with H2(c), support had also been found for Hypothesis 2(d), that human resource competencies had a positive influence on human resource change agent role. Similar to the regression model for H2(c), the regression model for H2(d) was statistically highly significance ($p < 0.001$). Thus, human resource competencies (independent variable) significantly explained human resource change agent role in Malaysia (dependent variable).

4. DISCUSSION

Eight research objectives had been defined to investigate the relationships between human resource skills, human resource competencies, and human resource roles. The first four objectives for this study were to examine the relationship between human resource skills and four human resource roles namely: strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion and change agent. Based on the data analysis, the correlation coefficients of 0.576 (hypotheses testing 1), 0.345 (hypotheses testing 2), 0.248 (hypotheses

testing 3), and 0.259 (hypotheses testing 4) indicated a positive relationship between human resource skills and four human resource roles in the context of Malaysian organizations. These research findings supported four hypotheses that postulated a positive influence on human resource skills in human resource roles at the $p < 0.001$ level. Research objectives 1, 2, 3, and four were achieved.

Furthermore, the next four objectives were to examine the relationship between human resource competencies and human resource roles. The correlation coefficients of 0.718 (hypotheses testing 5), 0.489 (hypotheses testing 6), 0.179 (hypotheses testing 7), and 0.330 (hypotheses testing 8) indicated a positive relationship between human resource competencies and human resource four roles in the Malaysian context. The test results supported all of the four hypotheses that postulated a positive influence of human resource competencies and human resource four roles at the $p < 0.001$ level. Research objectives 5, 6, 7, and eight were achieved.

To sum up, supports were established for the hypotheses that postulated the positive relationship between human resource skills, human resource competencies, and human resource roles. The proposed conceptual model for this study hence proved.

The results of this study present several implications for academicians and practitioners. There were two types of implications which could be derived from the overall research findings of this study: theoretical implications and practical implications.

Theoretically, the results of this study have corroborated the findings of human resource roles research in western contexts in the Malaysian cultural setting. Specifically, human resource roles has been found to be significant in increasing the human resource skills and competencies in Malaysian organizations consistent with the findings in previous studies for examples refer to for e.g [1,6,27,29]. Therefore, human resource skills and competencies are important variables in determining the human resource strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion, and change agent role in Malaysian organizations (i.e. multinational companies, private limited companies, small medium enterprises and government sector). This helps to fill up existing literature gap, since there is scarcity of studies in explaining the employees' perception of human resource roles in Malaysian context.

Another important theoretical implication of this study is that it contributes to the existing empirical evidence that supported the positive relationship between human resource skills, competencies and human resource roles in the context of Malaysian organizations for examples refer to [27,29].

Furthermore, this study is answering the question of Ulrich and Dulebohn [25] "are we there yet?". This study revealed the positive employees' perception of new human resource and showed a positive relationship between human resource skills, competencies and human resource roles. The results reveal that human resource professionals are performing the new human resource roles in Malaysian organizations. This gives the answer to the question asked by Ulrich and Dulebohn [25] thus fills the gap in the existing literature.

Based on the findings of this study, the implications for practitioners and managers are discussed. In order to remain competitive in the organization, human resource professionals need to acquire the required skills and competencies to perform human resource roles demanded by top management. Human resource professionals should pay attention to upgrade their competencies specifically in the area of business related knowledge such as financial accounting skills, operations management knowledge and marketing skills so that human resource play a role of strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion and change agent in order to fostering and implementing strategies that encourage high workplace performance and aid organizations to maintain competitive advantage [9]. Furthermore, human resource professionals should work collaboratively with line managers and encourage line managers to analyze the people side of productivity rather than depend solely on technical solutions to problem. Additionally, the lines managers need to be trained in certain human resource skills and competencies.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

First of all, the total responses retrieved throughout one-month data collection period were less than the sample size requirement of 271, which had been defined in the sampling design. This low sample size might be due to the nature of low response rate for the internet-mediated survey, whereby questionnaire emails were likely to be ignored by the respondents, mistreated as spam emails, or blocked by the companies' networks. As a result, the research findings might not be robust enough to generalize the population of multinational corporations, private limited companies, small and medium enterprise and government organizations in Malaysia. Accordingly, it is recommended for future researchers to adopt "delivery and collection" or structured interview methods to collect their research data. Since their methods tend to have a higher response rate as compared to internet-mediated survey or telephone survey.

Second, although the proposed conceptual model has been supported in the context of multinational companies, private limited companies, small medium enterprise and government organizations in Malaysia, it may be applied in the future research to specifically focusing on one particular sector to extract results from one particular industry. The employees' perception of human resource roles may vary from organization to organization as well as the human resource activities also differ from one organization to another such as multinational companies may differ from local private limited companies. The significance of human resource skills and competencies in explaining human resource roles might vary depending on the nature of the research contexts.

While this paper studied the relationship of human resource roles as a whole, future researcher are recommended to examine the individual roles in different settings. Further, researchers are recommended to examine the relationship of each of the four roles with the firm performance, employees' performance, and organizational performance.

6. CONCLUSION

This research has empirically studied the relationship between human resource skills, competencies, and human

resource roles. Respondents consisted of employees from four industries i.e. multinational companies, private limited companies, small medium enterprises and government sector. The results of this study indicate that human resource skills and competencies have a positive influence on human resource roles, thereby positioning itself at a competitive advantage, organizations should focus on improving human resource skills and competencies. The implications of these findings for academicians and practitioners were discussed, and recommendations were offered for future studies to expand the literature on the variables used in the study.

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