

PERCEIVED HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A STUDY AMONG TOUR GUIDES IN KOTA KINABALU, MALAYSIA

Datu Razali Datu Eranza¹
Shanan Navindra Shan Pillai²
Andy Lee Chen Hiung^{3*}
Jabil Mapjabil⁴
Siti Hasnah Tanalol⁵
Arsiah Bahron⁶

¹Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

²Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

³Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

⁴Borneo Institute of Indigenous Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

⁵Faculty of Computing and Informatics, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

⁶Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, MALAYSIA

*Corresponding Author: Andy Lee Chen Hiung (email: andylee@ums.edu.my)

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Abstract: COVID-19 has plunged global economy to recession and impacted businesses in all sectors, with reduction of manpower and termination of employment. Business organizations, especially those in the tourism industry may need to consider to continuously providing creative and innovative ways to support tour guides for personal development and self-enrichment. Support system like cost-effective training programme to tour guides can be meaningful and gain the affective commitment among the tour guides even post-termination. New approach in compensation, training and development, and performance appraisal would lead to a preparation for job performance in the future. The study has sampled 279 tour guides in Kota Kinabalu City, Sabah using online questionnaire, consists of questions related to human resource practices. The results suggested that all the practices studied have significant relationship to employee job performance especially during the difficult time of COVID-19 pandemic. The study recommends business firms to design an innovative and creative HR practices to support the tour guides regardless of the status of being employed or have been terminated. This may include facilitation of online training provided (free) by agencies and universities around the globe, financial aid and assistance programme by the Government, and facilitation of vaccination programme that could be very much meaningful to the tour guides.

Keywords: COVID-19, Human Resource Practices, Compensation, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal

Overview

The statistics on the COVID-19 pandemic are daunting, and the first three months of the global pandemic have caused schools and universities closed to more than one billion students of all ages. Last year up until November 2020, COVID-19 has spread to almost all countries and affected more than 50 million people worldwide, caused over 1.25 million deaths and more than half of the population in the world was under lockdowns and living under stringent containment measures (SME Corp, 2021). As of 13 August 2021, total recorded cases worldwide are 206,449,729, with 4,352,496 deaths and 185, 272,614 recovered (Worldometer, 2021), a 312.9% increase from former record mentioned. In Malaysia, Coronavirus cases has reached the total of 1,363,683, with 11,968 deaths and 1,110,528 recovered (Worldometer, 2021).

SME Corp (2021) further reported that the lockdown in the European Union (EU), the world's largest importer of industrial inputs and highly integrated into global supply chains, have caused the greatest shocks to supply chain exports elsewhere. Exports of industrial inputs from Asia are projected to decline by USD71.4 billion. The exposure of Asian countries to China is largely in electronics supply chains that include Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

The Malaysian Government has implemented several economic stimulus packages to ensure the well-being of the people as well as the survival of businesses that have been adversely affected by the subsequent containment measures. The packages are the RM20 billion Economic Stimulus Package 2020 (PRE2020) followed by the RM230 billion PRIHATIN for SMEs. RM35 billion National Economic Recovery Plan (PENJANA) and RM10 billion *Kita Prihatin package* (SME Corp, 2021).

The comprehensive report by SME Corp provides the chart of the impacts of the stimulus packages on SMEs are wage subsidy programme (58.2%), micro credit scheme (48.9%), six-month moratorium on loans (40.2%), special relief facility (37.8%), 2% discount on electricity bills (32.4%), EPF consultation services (20.0%) and *Geran Khas Prihatin Mikro* (10.7%).

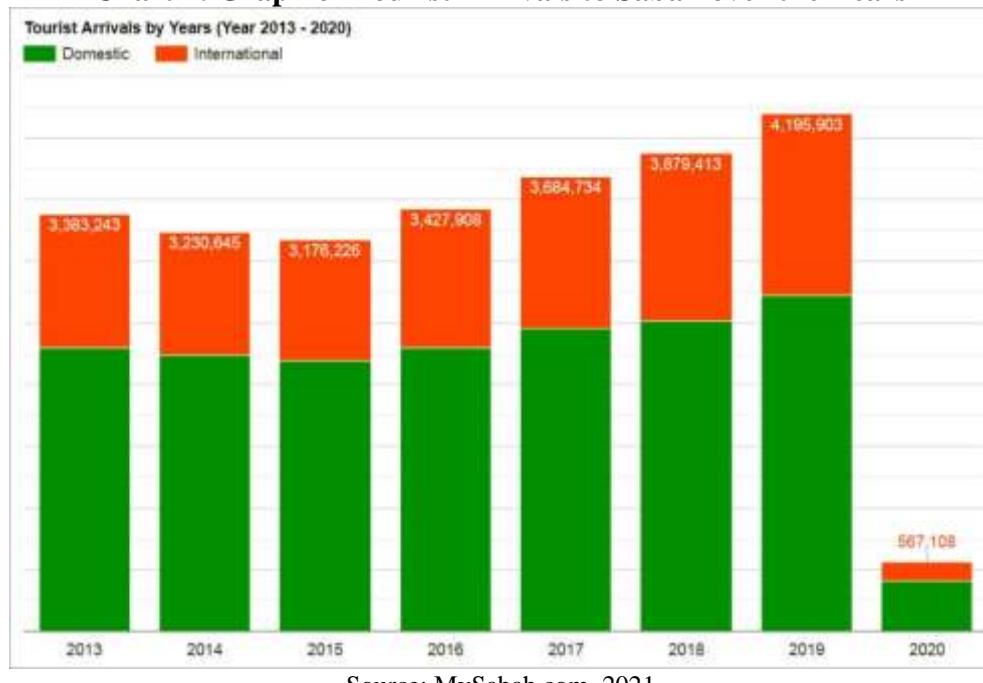
In Sabah, the stimulus packages comprised of 2% microcredit fund for 20,000 small businesses worth RM40 million, RM50 million SME industry fund loan at 3.5% interest rate, 1,000 village basic infrastructure projects worth RM200 million, 28% electricity bill discount (April – June 2020), 20% discount on 2020 assessment collection by local authority, and 2020 license fee and six-month rent exemption for premises under local authority for hawkers (SME Corp, 2021).

Introduction

Sabah is known as The Land Below the Wind, and the second largest state in Malaysia. Sabah has an area that spans 72,000 sq. kilometers, sits on the northern-most part of Borneo; the third largest island in the world. Sabah is blessed with natural resources, beauty of nature, distinctive cultural identities, and ethnicity of its people (Sabah State Government official website, 2021). The economy of Sabah relies on the export of its primary and minimally processed commodities, agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. Before the pandemic, former Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment stated that Sabah has recorded 4,195,903 tourist arrivals with estimated tourism receipts of RM9.01 billion for the period of January – December 2019. The record registered a growth of 8.1 per cent compared with RM8.34 billion

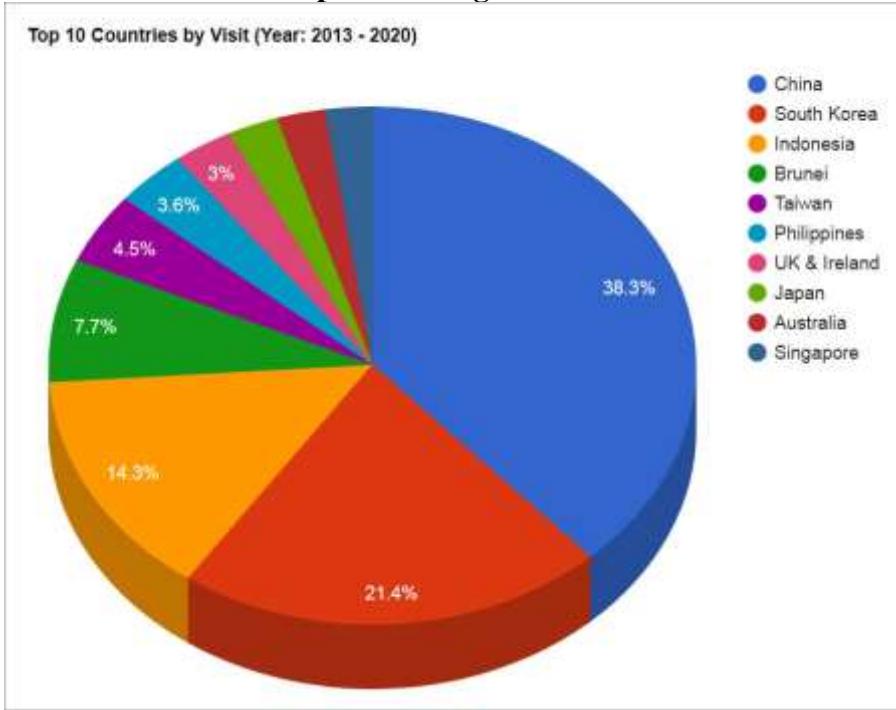
the previous year (Borneo Post, 2020). After pandemic affected the tourism sectors and industries, with the travel ban of tourists to the state, international arrivals decreased -99.7%, domestic arrivals decrease -92.5%, and total arrivals dropped to -94.6% (Sabah Tourism, 2021). MySabah.com provided the following charts:

Chart 1: Graph of Tourist Arrivals to Sabah over the Years



Source: MySabah.com, 2021

Chart 2: Top 10 Visiting Countries to Sabah



Source: MySabah.com, 2021

During the pandemic, the coronavirus hit hard on tourism industry in Malaysia. With all of the cancellation of hotels and airlines, the tourism industry of Malaysia is largely affected and could be worst challenge ever facing the tourism industry of Malaysia. CEO of the Malaysian Hotel association projected that Malaysia would lose at least 60% of its tourism business by 2020 after the entry ban and many hotels were struggling to survive (Bethke, 2020). Idris (2021) reported on theedgemarkets.com that Malaysia's 2020 domestic tourism spending plunged for first time in 13 years. Idris reported in the news that the implementation of movement restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic had affected domestic tourism activities in Malaysia, and the domestic visitor arrivals decreased by 44.9% to recorded 131.7 million visitors compared to 239.1 million visitors in 2019. The decline if 60.8% in the total expenditure was estimated to be RM40.4 billion as compared to RM103.2 billion in the previous year.

Problem Statement

Levine (2020) mentioned The World Travel and Tourism Council stated that some 50 million jobs in travel and tourism were at risk due to the pandemic. The shutdown includes museums, monuments, and attractions that were crossed and restricted placed by the government for travel across the globe, let to the possibility that tour guides could be the major casualty following the sharp and sudden industry downturn. Explained further by her, some tour guides are freelance, hourly workers whose livelihoods depended not only on regular work but the tips from appreciative tourists. This group of employees are unlikely to have paid sick leave, unemployment insurance or any other benefits enjoyed by many salaried workers.

Idris reported that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in a joint statement dated on 30 June 2021, said the crash in international tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic could cause a combined loss of more than US\$4 trillion (about RM16.61 trillion) to the global gross domestic product for 2020 and 2021 due to the direct impact of the pandemic and its ripple effect on the other sectors closely related to it. In the joint statement today, both parties said the report titled "COVID-19 and Tourism – An Update", indicated that international tourism and the sectors suffered an estimated loss of US\$2.4 trillion in 2020 due to the direct and indirect impact of steep drop in international tourist arrivals. Apart from that, a similar loss has also been projected and warned that tourism sector's recovery depends on the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines globally. Idris cited on UNWTO, the tourism sector is expected to recover faster in countries with high vaccination rates but experts did not expect a return to pre-COVID-19 international tourist arrival levels until 2023 or later.

A study on the tour guide and tour services industry can be meaningful to the body of knowledge and various exercises could be planned and practiced by business organization. This study would be an attempt to gain insight the perception of tour guides that could affect their job performance during or after COVID-19 pandemic. Apart in reviewing the problem facing the industry, it could be better to gain perspective from tour guides related to the perceived or preferred human resource practices as to prepare them to work better during or post COVID-19 pandemic.

With the multi-dimensional pressure affecting the businesses and employees in this sector, Levine mentioned that some of the strategies could be done during and post COVID-19. She cited one case study on Context Travel, a tour operator in over 60 cities across six continents

developed an innovative approach ‘Context Conversations’. The ‘Context’ including turning tours into at-home seminars comprised of ‘Beijing through the ages’, ‘Venice in Peril’, and ‘The Aesthetics of Tokyo’.

A study done by Brito and Carvalho (2021) reflects on the tour guiding industry in 2020 and the impact of COVID-19. The paper suggested that while the pandemic and the associated lockdowns has devastated the tourism industry, it has also encouraged those working in the industry to be more innovative and imaginative in business practices. The authors believed that COVID-19 mostly affected senior people and 75% of tourist parties are composed of people over 50, and they started to avoid travelling and started to save money for the uncertain future.

Brito and Carvalho stated ‘Safe and clean’ is now the motto. The safe and clean motto has implications in the work of tour guides that they have to make tourists feel safe and confident while traveling. The motto mentioned is similar to ‘Stay safe’ or ‘social distancing’ in Malaysia is a rule followed everywhere by everyone.

Further mentioned by them, many guides were listed as unemployed people although many states in EU granted the tour guides with a subvention. However, it was obviously not enough to keep the lifestyle the guides had before; some guides decided to change activity, working in a number of different sectors, from real estate companies to call centres, taking advantage of their existing communication and interpersonal skills.

Research Objectives

The objective of the study was to survey the perceived human resource practices and job performance of tour guides in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

Significance of Study

With the insight and perspective obtained from the tour guides sampled, tourism policy makers and businesses could understand better about their job characteristics and perceptions toward their respective organizational human resource practices.

Terms and Concepts

COVID-19

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (Bronze, 2021). It is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus that infects people with a mild to moderate respiratory illness, and more serious to those with underlying medical problems.

Tourism

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business / professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure (The World Tourism Organization, 2021).

Tour Guides

Tourist guide is defined as a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area, which the person may possess an area of specific qualification (World Federation of Tourist Guides Associations, 2021).

Human Resource Practices

Human resource practices (HR practices) are the means through which human resource personnel can develop the leadership of the staff, including constructing avenues through which employees will have opportunities for advancement (Chron.com, 2021). HR practices are based on legal compliance requirements, company goals, and human resource professions best practices. HR departments use the practices to guide HR activities, include hiring, firing, payroll, benefits, wellness, morale-building and other day-to-day tasks. The activities performed by human resources teams correlate with HR practices.

Human resource practices in the proposed study focused on compensation, appraisal, and training and development. Human resource practices are a system that attracts, develops, motivates, and retain employees to have a significant result of effectiveness and sustainability of an organization, a conceptualization of internal policies and practices of organization to ensure the human capital and contribute to achieving the goals of organization (Tan and Nasurdin, 2011).

Human resource management has the capacity of influencing the organizational behavior of employees, thereby ensuring achievement of the corporate objectives, and positively influence firm performance leads to organizational commitment (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, Hasan and Del Giudice, 2019).

Compensation

Compensation is a systematic approach to providing monetary value to employees in exchange for work performed. It can achieve several purposes assisting in recruitment, job performance and job satisfaction (HR Guide.com, 2021). Bora (2021) refers it as the remuneration that an employee receives in return for his/her services to the organization, and compensation management is an integrated part of human resource management and helps in motivating the employees and improving organizational effectiveness, includes everything an employee receives in return for his work such as wages, salaries, allowances, benefits, and services. Bora cited on Cascio defined it as different forms of payment and rewards provided to employees for performing various tasks that lead to the attainment of organizational objectives.

Training and Development

Employee training escalates the proficiency and ability of the employees for completing specific task, and employees are viewed as important resources of the organization (Jawaad et al.; Jimenez and Valle, 2012). Training able to streamline the understanding and expertise of employees (Fong, Ooi, Tan, Lee and Chong, 2011) and training amplifies the expertise of human resources to be more proficient, as well as strengthening the capabilities to provide a sense of good career that leads to safe culture and assist the development of self-efficacy (Guest, 2017). Jawaad mentioned that training programs are directed by qualified managers of the same companies or can be hired from external agencies with the objective of boosting the workforce efficiency toward the organization, and training programs raise personnel's

commitment that leads to organizational performance (Bimpitsos and Petridou, 2012 as cited by Jawaad), and enhancement of employees' training increased organizational commitment (Pasaoglu, 2015 as cited by Jawaad).

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of then performance of employees and to understand the abilities of a person for further future growth and development. Performance appraisal is done as: the supervisors measure the pay of employees and compare it with targets and plans; the supervisor analyzes the factors behind work performances of employees; and the employers are in position to guide the employees for a better performance (Juneja, 2021). Levinsons (1976) stated the functions of performance appraisal are: to provide adequate feedback to each person on his performance; to serve as a basis for modifying or changing behavior toward more effective working habits; and to provide data to managers with which they may judge future job assignments and compensation.

Job Performance

Job performance relates to the act of doing a job, and is a means to reach a goal or set of goals within a job, role, or organization, but not the actual consequences of the acts performed within a job (Jacobs, Hellman, Wuest, and Markowitz, 2013).

Literature Review

Impact of COVID-19 on Malaysian Businesses

'Special Survey Effects of COVID-19 on Economy and Companies/ Businesses Firms', a survey on 4,904 companies (43.4% microenterprises, 40.4% small-sized businesses, 9.1 medium-sized and 7.2 large firms) was conducted by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), from 10 April until 1 March 2020 during Phase 2 to Phase 4 of the MCO. Findings from the survey revealed that more than two-thirds of respondents (67.8%) reported no revenue during this period, while a small portion of 12.3% generated their income via online and 9.8% made the earning through physical shops (SME Corp, 2021).

In the same report: Special Highlights published by SME Corp (2021), stated services particularly travel and tourism are among those hit the hardest. From the onset of the pandemic outbreak to 7 May 2020, 113 countries had imposed global travel bans. ASEAN's tourism sector heavily depended on Chinese tourists and East Asian economies. The World Tourism Organization anticipated a 60% to 80% decline year on year in international tourists arrival, that might cost 100.8 million jobs in travel and tourism sector. Similar context in European Union where tourism, transportation, food and fashion are taking the impacts as well, led to the containment measures. Travel and tourism contributed 12.6% to ASEAN's economy in 2018. 43.8% or 126.9 million people in ASEAN's workforce (excluding civil service) were employed in the service sector. Malaysia is the second in ASEAN to employ highest percentage of employees in the services sector (56.6%), after Singapore (65.7%).

A publication by Monash University titled Impact of COVID-19 on Malaysian Businesses, outlined the top factors affecting Malaysian Businesses:

Table 1: Top Factors Affecting Malaysian Businesses

Impact	Concern	Risk
Anticipate cancelling / postponing projects	Financial impact	Worsen living conditions (urban)
Re-strategizing financial commitments	Potential global recession	Risk of work stress
Concern about workforce becoming ill	Risk of closure of company	Economic stagnation

Source: Adopted from Global Asia in the 21st Century Research Platform, Monash University Malaysia and Monash Malaysia R&D Sdn Bhd Publication- Impact of COVID-19 on Malaysian Businesses

Based on the publication, the industries that are most concerned with a decrease in consumer confidence are the food and beverage, entertainment and tourism, and agriculture industries. The impact of COVID-19 has caused a third of the firms in the industries have difficulty to stay afloat for one to three months. The impact on the sectors is outlined as follow:

Table 2: Sectors and Primary Impact

Sectors	Primary Impact
Manufacturing	Financial commitment
Food and beverage	Financial commitment
Logistics	Financial commitment
Entertainment and tourism	Workforce
Advanced manufacturing	Workforce
Healthcare	Workforce
Education	Cancellations of events and enrolments
Retail and logistics	Supply chain disruptions

Source: Adopted from Global Asia in the 21st Century Research Platform, Monash University Malaysia and Monash Malaysia R&D Sdn Bhd Publication- Impact of COVID-19 on Malaysian Businesses

Most sectors are concerned about the financial impact and a global recession, with the entertainment and tourism sectors were equally concerned about business closure, as much as global tourism around the world closed off borders, that cause the sector face the largest hurdles to survive. It is also reported that 85% of businesses in the entertainment and tourism sector expected a decrease in revenue / profits followed by 80% for manufacturing and 77% for food and beverage sector.

International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that COVID-19 pandemic has evolved into a health, socioeconomic and humanitarian crises of unprecedented scale and impact. The situation in Malaysia was compounded by the fact that the Government came into power in early March 2020, was already facing a heavy debt problem, financial constraints, plummeting oil prices, and knock-on effects on trade and tourism from the global shut down. Tourism related sectors were expected to be affected by broad-based travel restrictions and travel risk aversion. A table adopted from the publication highlights the perceptions and changes in lifestyle:

Table 3.1: Main priority facing the current situation

Main priority facing the current situation	Percentage (%)
Health and life	90.9
Income (jobs, business, enterprise)	4.6
Normal life	4.5

Source: Adopted from ILO publication

Table 3.2: Changes in Life

Changes in lifestyle	Percentage (%)
More careful about hygiene	93.6
Limit social activities	83.3
Limit tourism activities	67.1
Not eating out	43.5
Limit sports and recreational activities	42.4
Limit religious and prayer activities to the home	33.7
Others	3.1

Source: Adopted from ILO publication

One extensive work on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry in Malaysia was done by Zubair and Shamsudin (2021). The authors cited on the report made by Waisul Karim (2020), that the average stay of tourists in Malaysia has been recorded as one night to six nights that raised the revenue to RM41.69 billion, resulting from 13.35 million foreign tourists arrival. In Malaysia, the range of tourists are listed as follow:

Table 4: Range of Tourists in 2019

Country	Number of Tourists
Indonesia	1,857,864
China	1,558,782
Thailand	990,565
Brunei	627,112
India	354,486
The Philippines	210,974
Vietnam	200,314
Japan	196,561
Singapore	5,381

Source: Adopted from Zubair and Shamsudin (2021)

Zubair and Shamsudin also reported data on the loss from cancellations of rooms at different states in Malaysia.

Table 5: Room Cancellation and Loss (January to March 2020)

State	Cancellation of Rooms	Loss (RM)
Kuala Lumpur	55,050	23,021,301
Sabah	32,392	11,550,605
Pulau Pinang	17,753	8,908,000
Selangor	22,929	7,212,048

Negeri Sembilan	13,534	6,690,500
Johor	18,455	5,636,470
Kedah	3,239	3,291,500
Perak	2,403	1,022,289
Melaka	4,074	690,499
Pahang	180	144,628
Sarawak	76	22,529
Total	170,085	68,190,369

Source: Adopted from Zubair and Shamsudin (2021)

The authors also reported the data obtained from the Malaysian Association of the Hotels, of the impacts on hotel industry workers in Malaysia:

Table 6: Impacts on Hotel Industry Workers

State	Salary Deduction	Unpaid Leave	Laid off
Kuala Lumpur	2,880	3,641	542
Sabah	893	1,075	177
Pulau Pinang	240	430	84
Selangor	134	1,812	238
Negeri Sembilan	0	179	130
Johor	108	202	72
Kedah	0	80	0
Perak	91	595	245
Melaka	65	191	85
Pahang	0	150	231
Sarawak	175	258	92
Total	4,586	8,613	1,896

Source: Adopted from Zubair and Shamsudin (2021)

A study on COVID-19 and governmental measures to support tourist guides was published Martin (2020). Martin provided an overview of the measure government have taken to alleviate the negative economic impacts of the pandemic on the tourist guides as one of the hardest hit professions. The research conducted was based on two approaches: an online search of national websites, and tourist guides specifically. The findings suggested that many of the countries in the world, especially those from Africa, South America, and the Pacific, took no measures to support entrepreneurs hit by the COVID-19 crisis. The most widely used measure was direct financial help, adopted by many of the EU members, USA, Canada, and several countries in Asia.

Human Resource Practices and Employee Job Performance

Mohd. Nawi and Ismail (2021) has written that human resources management (HRM) is the process of recruiting, selecting, providing orientation, appraising the performance of employees, and providing benefits to employees. Performance appraisal is one of the core components to get effective employee performance and employee satisfaction in their work to grow in business globalization. Mohd Nawi and Ismail mentioned it could become the organization's strategy and objective that can achieve in competitive advantage and analyze the higher-level productivity that can benefit the country, organization, and individuals.

Therefore, the purpose of the research conducted by them was to examine the effect of performance appraisal toward employee performance and employee satisfaction among employees. The quantitative approach was applied to collect data among 104 employees through an online survey questionnaire. The results from the analysis revealed that there is no relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance. However, the results also revealed that there is a positive relationship between performance appraisal and employee satisfaction. The appropriate of this finding indicates the performance appraisal could affect the employee satisfaction among employees positively.

Compensation and Job Performance

Study done by Prihantoko and Ferijani (2021) indicated that compensation (and benefit) affect employee performance. The result was similar to the research done by Pratminingsih, Nur Sucianti, and Wulandari (2021), reported the outcome of the investigation of their research shown that motivation, compensation and job satisfaction simultaneously and independently affect performance. Article written by Rakyan (2021) stated that to keep organizations on the track, there are five areas of employee compensation for HR to consider: restructure pay for remote working, differentiate rewards for critical digital talent, companies that do right, do well, protect employee data, and measure return on investment on compensation spending.

Another study done by Reddy and Santosh (2021) in the context of IT companies, it was aimed to explore the composition of "Job Performance" for employees in IT Industry of Pune city. The paper applies data reduction using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on a sample of 273 respondents and reduces a set of 13 compensation management practices determinants into a list of three comprehensible factors. The present study investigate the impact of compensation management practices determinants on the employee job performance .The study found that remuneration, identification and recreational facilities are impacting significantly the employee job performance. Therefore, Reddy and Santosh IT Companies should focus on the above factors to provide enrich employee job performance.

Another study in the banking industry conducted by Hutahayan (2021), with the paper conducted in a more in-depth study of employee performance to connect with compensation and job satisfaction and the work environment of employees in PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. (BRI). The research was conducted at PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. operating in Indonesia. The research population was all employees of the Branch Offices of PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. spread over in Sumatera, Jawa, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali and Jayapura. The sample was collected using Proportional Random Sampling Stratified from six locations spread throughout Indonesia. Considering the wide area, the sampling technique is adjusted to the area, so sampling is based on the island as a sub-population. The sample of this study was 212 employees. This amount has met the minimum sampling requirements if using the Generalised Structural Component Analysis (GSCA) method. Compensation does not directly affect employee performance. Working environment directly influences the employee performance in PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. There is an influence of compensation and working environment on job satisfaction and employee performance in PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. The leader of PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. should improve employees' performance by taking into account the improvement of compensation which includes the suitability of wages and salaries, incentives, benefits and facilities with their performance.

Nzyoka and Orwa (2016) mentioned that compensation is made up of several components, base and variable pay, equity, incentives, and benefits. A well-designed compensation framework rewards measurable changes in behavior that contribute to clearly defined goals. Management must decide the compensation elements and make the most sense for each type of job. As cited by them on Milkovich and Newman (2005), rewards bridge the gap between organizational objectives and individual expectations and aspirations.

Organizational total compensation systems should provide sufficient to fulfill basic needs, equity with external references, equity with internal references, and treatment of each member of the organization according to the individual needs. Nzyoka and Orwa have written that extrinsic rewards are often paid for an organization to demonstrate its seriousness in valuing performance or employee contribution to organizational goal.

Application of extrinsic rewards is tightly related to performance and motivates employees to be hungry for money and hence destroy intrinsic interests in the job (cited by Nzyoka and Orwa on Dolan, 1997). Extrinsic rewards drive workers morale, and the contribution of the rewards has existed in organizations especially in accordance with performance evaluation (Appelbaum, Schroeder, Cain, Mitroff, 2011 cited by Nzyoka and Orwa), but contradicted to Wood (1974) as cited by Nzyoka and Orwa, highly involved workers who are more oriented to their occupations are dependent more on intrinsic than extrinsic rewards.

Businesses use pay, promotions, bonuses or other types of rewards to motivate and encourage high-level performance of employees. In motivating high performance, money is the fundamental inducement; no other motivation technique has been applied widely than pay due to its influential value. When there is good performance measurers, performance pay can enhance employee productivity and improve match quality (Nzyoka and Orwa on Lemieux, MacLeod, W. B, Parent, D., 2009).

Overall, studies related to compensation and job performance were found positive as mentioned early including the study made by Nzyoka and Orwa (2016). The study concluded there is a positive relationship between total compensation and employee performance. A qualitative study made by Ahmed (2014) also concluded that there is a positive relation between compensation and employee performance. Result reported by Oluibo and Anyiam (2017) were similar as well.

Training and Development, and Job Performance

Study done by Aldhukair and Abunar (2021) was carried out to analyze the effect of training and development on employees' performance in the private sector Saudi Arabia. This study was done based on quantitative research approach. The sample population of this work comprised of 50 respondents who are corporate employees in the private sector of Saudi Arabia. Data was collected using survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions which were related to training and development. The questionnaire was administered online. The results showed that 62% of the respondent agreed that training and development is a medium to enhance skills and maintain high work performance. In addition, the result showed that the training should be comprehensive focusing on all job categories in order to enhance the overall performance of the organization. Furthermore, the results showed that employees perceived that both soft skill and technical skill training are equally important for work performance.

Thus, it is concluded that training has a positive effect on employees' performance, and allows them to develop their capabilities.

A study examined the impact of training on employees' work performance was conducted by Omokojie, and Edith (2021). The study sought answers to the relationship between training and development of employees and their job satisfaction, relationship between training and development of employees and their job performance, as well as the relationship between training and development of employees and their motivation. The scope of the study consisted of 208 employees of Integrated Data Services Limited (IDSL), Benin City. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting the respondents for the study while questionnaire served as the data collection instrument. Research data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, mean, standard deviation and standard error mean as well as the t-test for Equality of Means, which served as the inferential statistic. The research findings show that; i) There is a significant relationship between training and development of employees and their job satisfaction; (training enhances job satisfaction) ii) There is a significant relationship between training and development and their job performance and iii) There is a significant relationship between employee training and development and their motivation.

Another study was done by Rodriguez and Walters (2017), shows that employee performance impacts the bottom line of an organization. For this reason, it is the responsibility of organizational leaders to be aware of the importance of training and development's impact on the performance and evaluation of employees. Employee training and development assists the organization and employees in attaining diverse goals, such as improving morale, sense of security, employee engagement, and overall competencies necessary to perform a particular job. In addition, organizational leaders should use systematic approaches for assessing employee performance, which outcomes are usually determined on personal, organizational, environmental, motivation, skill level, aptitudes, or role perceptions factors. With suitable training and development opportunities, as well as effective employee performance assessment approaches, employees will be capable of assisting the organization in achieving its competitive posture in today's global market.

Investing in employee training would improve worker retention rates, customer satisfaction and creativity for new product ideas. Effective training save labor by reducing time spent on problem-solving and saves money in the long run by producing a better workforce (Shaw, 2019). Similar findings mentioned by Al-Mzary, Al-riflai, and Al-Momany (2015) that there is relationship between effective training and employee's job performance.

Training programs improve knowledge, skills and positive work behavior of employees, and the result of their study supported that training related variables have positive impact on employees' job performance except cognitive competence (Awang, Ismail and Mohd Noor, 2010). As reported by Awang et al., all the variables (training content, financing training, trainers' quality, technical skills, respect, work commitment) except cognitive competence are significantly associated with employee' job performance.

Sharma and Tenaja (2018) concluded their study and confirmed that there was a positive impact of training on employee performance, similar result reported by Hameed (2011) that employee development is vital for employee performance, and positive relationship between training and development and employee performance (Franklin, 2014).

Performance Appraisal and Job Performance

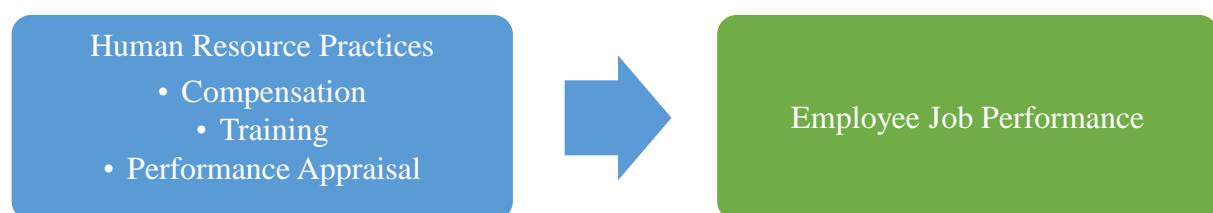
A study conducted by Jabeen, Muhtaq, Ellahi and Begum (2021) was intended to find the interaction of performance appraisal justice, work engagement on employee job performance. Hypotheses testing was done using linear regression data on the data set of 325 respondents. The results are significant and indicated that Justice in the performance appraisal system is positively related to employee outcomes (OCB and job performance) with mediating effect of work engagement. Interaction between exogenous, endogenous, and intervening variables suggests that there is a positive relationship between all variables.

Sopiah (2016) stated that performance appraisal to improve employee performance could only be achieved when it is carried out properly. Sopiah cited on Werther and Davis (1996), mentioned that one purpose of performance appraisal is to improve employee performance, as well as the performance appraisal would improve employee performance, if a performance appraisal is carried out properly, then the performance appraisal, (Armstrong, 1990). Sopiah concluded that several empirical studies result also supported the theoretical studies that there is a positive relationship between the performance appraisal and the employees' job performance.

Iqbal (2013) found that there is a significant relationship between performance appraisal has significant relationship with employee performance, found to be similar the findings by Gelézeau (2003), and Wanjala and Kimutai (2015).

Research Design

Research Framework



The objective of the study was to survey the perceived human resource practices and job performance of tour guides in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Human resource practices were measured based on the dimensions of: compensation, training, and performance appraisal.

The independent variables are human resource practices: compensation, training, and performance appraisal, and dependent variable is employee job performance.

For the study, quantitative approach was used to study on the relationship of the variables. Convenience sampling was applied to conduct the data collection via questionnaire.

Sample Size

Questionnaire was distributed among 353 tourist guides in Kota Kinabalu. Based on the records provided by MOTAC:

Table 7: Statistics of Tour Guides and Spoken Language

Language	Number
Malay	412
Mandarin	1077
Cantonese	109
English	1497
French	1
German	12
Japanese	123
Korean	12
Russian	2
Thai	1
Total	3,246

Source: MOTAC 2021

Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was deployed to collect data. Five-point scale was used to measure the items of human resource practices and job performance.

Table 8: Likert Scale Description for Questionnaire

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Questionnaire was developed based on the following references:

Table 9: Questionnaire Source of Adaptation

Compensation	Source
Compensation	Olarewaju, 2014
Training and Development	Chaudhary & Bhaskar, 2016
Performance Appraisal	Agarwal, 2014
Employee Performance (Task Performance)	Koopmans, 2014

Response Rate

Of 353 questionnaires has been distributed among the tour guides in Kota Kinabalu, 279 was returned. The return rate was about 79.03%. From 279 questionnaires collected, 61.6% of the tour guides was full time employment, and the remain 38.4% were part time. 66.3% of the tour guides are male and 33.7% are female. More than half (58.4%) of the tour guides had working experience between 1-5 years, 30.1% were 6-10 years working experience, and 11.5% with more than 10 years working experience.

Data Analyses

Reliability Test

Table 10: Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Reliability Cronbach Alpha	Internal Consistency
Human Resource Practices (Compensation, Training and Development, and Performance Appraisal)	21	0.926	Excellent
Compensation	5	0.915	Excellent
Training and Development	8	0.813	Good
Performance Appraisal	8	0.890	Good
Employee Performance	24	0.876	Good

Pearson Correlations Analysis

Table 11a: Pearson Correlations Analysis

		HR Practices	Employee Performance
HR Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	279	279
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	279	279
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.505**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	279	279

Table 11b: Pearson Correlations Analysis

		C	T&D	PA	EP
Compensation	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**	.496**	.254**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Training And Development	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1	.599**	.480**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Performance Appraisal	Pearson Correlation	.496**	.599**	1	.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.254**	.480**	.482**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	279	279	279	279

Results and Findings

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Human Resource Practices and Employee Performance

Table 12: Regression Analysis for Human Resource Practices and Employee Performance

Model		Employee Performance
Standard Coefficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.505
	t	9.631
	Sig.	0.000
R ²		0.255
Adjusted R ²		0.252
F		94.582

Predictor: Human Resource Practices

Dependent: Employee Performance

Based on the result, there is a significant relationship between Human Resource Practices and Employee Job Performance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Compensation and Employee Performance

Table 13: Regression Analysis for Compensation and Employee Performance

Model		Employee Performance
Standard Coefficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.254
	t	4.736
	Sig.	0.000
R ²		0.065
Adjusted R ²		0.061
F		19.148

Predictor: Compensation

Dependent: Employee Performance

Based on the result, there is a significant relationship between Compensation and Employee Job Performance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Training and Development, and Employee Performance

Table 14: Regression Analysis for Training and Development and Employee Performance

Model		Employee Performance
Standard Coefficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.480
	t	9.104
	Sig.	0.000
R ²		0.230
Adjusted R ²		0.228
F		82.866

Predictor: Training and Development
 Dependent: Employee Performance

Based on the result, there is a significant relationship between Training and Development, and Employee Job Performance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between Performance Appraisal and Employee Performance

Table 15: Regression Analysis for Performance Appraisal and Employee Performance

Model		Employee Performance
Standard Coefficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.482
	t	9.149
	Sig.	0.000
R ²		0.232
Adjusted R ²		0.229
F		83.700

Predictor: Performance Appraisal
 Dependent: Employee Performance

Based on the result, there is a significant relationship between Performance Appraisal and Employee Job Performance. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Based on the tests conducted, the results show that all the variables of human resource practices (compensation, training and development, and performance appraisal) are significantly related to employee job performance.

Discussions

Human resource practices are always important in motivating and managing employees' behavior in their job performance. Tourism firms can design a framework that supports the tour guides based on the compensation system, training and development, and performance appraisal of the companies.

Based on the analyses made, companies can redesign the compensation package or system for the tour guides to keep them motivated and felt appreciated by the companies. Termination would always be the last resort, that somehow seemed to be inevitable for some organizations.

Hence, a supportive compensation to the employees would be meaningful and appreciative to the tour guides of the companies.

For training and development, all programs can be conducted online by employers and online training courses can be applied by tour guides during pandemic times. There are online courses available provided by various government agencies and universities around the globe. Free and accessible training should be encouraged among the tour guides to enrich personal growth in preparation for tourists' intake in future after vaccination programme have been completed, and when countries around the globe have started to lift the travel ban and allow tourists to come in.

New performance appraisal should take place, where it may not be related directly to financial compensation or increment of salary as before the pandemic. Attention and encouragement by employers to the tour guides could be meaningful to them in facing the difficult time. Information related to government assistance and aid can be disseminated by the employers and facilitating the tour guides to obtain them. These could be inclusive of government aid to tour guides, vaccination appointment programme, healthcare awareness, and others.

Conclusions

Human resource practices are a creative and innovative approach by employers to facilitate the needs of the employee for wellbeing-ness, and to provide as much comfort during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Employers should continue to provide cost-effective programme for the tour guides in building their personal capacity and motivating them to feel appreciated and feel belonging to the organization.

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