

Optimizing Human Resource Management Practices and Enhancing Organizational Commitment of Migrant Workers

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Abstract

During the period of economic and social transformation in China, migrant workers, as a special group, have a dual identity. Although they are farmers, they migrate between working areas like migratory birds and become de facto industrial workers. But its high turnover rate and liquidity bring many problems to the management of the enterprise. This article analyzes this issue from the perspective of human resource management practice and proposes corresponding solutions.

Key words: Migrant workers; Human resource management practices; Organizational commitments

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1. QUESTION RAISING

Migrant workers are a product of China's economic and social transformation period, and they are farmers engaged in non-agricultural industries. They are a special group of farmers who have not yet or have not been able to transform their identity, but are engaged in non-agricultural production, operation, work, and even residential life in urban areas (Wenbo, 2005, pp.90-91). In 2022, there are about 29.562 million rural migrant workers in China. In terms of industries, 99.5% of migrant workers are engaged in the secondary and

tertiary industries. Among them, 51.7% are engaged in the tertiary industry; The proportion of people engaged in the secondary industry is 47.8%. From the six main employment industries of migrant workers, the proportion of those engaged in manufacturing is 27.4%; The proportion of people engaged in the construction industry is 17.7%; The proportion of engaged in wholesale and retail industry is 12.5%; The proportion of people engaged in transportation, warehousing, and postal services is 6.8%; The proportion of people engaged in the accommodation and catering industry is 6.1%; The proportion of people engaged in residential service repair and other service industries is 11.9%. Therefore, migrant workers have actually become the main force of industrial workers, and the concentration of industrial human resources is high.

However, migrant workers have almost become synonymous with short-term work and mobility, and their human resource management practices generally face problems such as low wages and salaries, lack of labor security, and scarce opportunities for training and internal promotion. In enterprises, the organizational commitment of migrant workers is low, they will repeatedly search for better jobs, and the turnover rate is high. At the same time, the cost of personal search has increased, and the recruitment and adjustment costs of enterprises have also increased. Strong mobility and migratory migrant workers have led to a shortage of skilled and skilled workers in some areas, and many enterprises frequently experience shortages of skilled and senior skilled workers.

Scholars have provided different explanations for this phenomenon, such as Liu Linping (2006, pp.45-53) believes that it is caused by a lack of systems. Wang Cheng (2005, pp.1-10) believes that it is due to oversupply in the labor market and market failure. Meng Yanchun (2004, pp.13-15) believes that it is a distortion of the value of labor capital. such as Liu Linping's (2006) belief that it is a distortion of the value of labor capital. Most scholars mainly explain the shortage of migrant workers

and skilled workers from the perspectives of sociology and economics, and seek solutions from the perspective of macroeconomic management, such as government intervention for effective intervention, leveraging the role of trade unions, and establishing a security system. However, this article aims to analyze the issue from the perspective of another identity of migrant workers, namely “industrial workers”.

In fact, hundreds of millions of migrant workers will ultimately be implemented in the work of enterprises. This article focuses on how enterprises can optimize human resource management practices for migrant workers, enhance their organizational commitment, improve their work performance, reduce voluntary turnover rates, reduce their mobility, and achieve a win-win outcome for migrant workers and enterprises.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Human Resource Management Practice

The content of human resource practice is very extensive, and the practical content that researchers focus on varies in different academic research. Delery and Doty (1996, pp. 802–835) selected seven common human resource practices from previous research, including: (1) Internal career opportunities: referring to the use of internal labor markets by enterprises; (2) Training: Refers to whether a company provides employees with extensive and formal training to enable them to acquire the skills required for their work; (3) Performance evaluation: Refers to whether an enterprise evaluates its employees based on behavior or results; (4) Employment security: Refers to whether enterprises adopt formal or informal employment security policies to enhance employees’ sense of security in employment; (5) Participation system: refers to whether the enterprise has a formal complaint channel and employee participation decision-making mechanism; (6) Work regulations: Refers to the degree of tightness defined by the job; (7) Profit sharing: Refers to whether a company has developed a profit sharing plan to link its distribution with organizational performance.

What are the best practices? Through empirical research on 125 advanced manufacturing technology application enterprises, Small & Yasin (1997) found that in the process of applying advanced manufacturing technology, enterprises that strengthen employee training achieved higher performance, while enterprises that adhere to a team based management policy achieved high performance. Pfeffer (1994) validated 16 human resource practices and ultimately found that practices such as participation and authorization, incentivized salary systems, employee safety, internal promotion, and training and skill development can bring higher productivity and profit margins to organizations.

Overall, the human resource management practices for migrant workers should mainly focus on the following practices: internal career opportunities and promotions, employment security and employee safety, the formation of training and participation systems, and appropriate profit sharing plans.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment (OC) reflects the extent to which employees understand, recognize, and invest in the emotions, goals, and behaviors of their affiliated company. Originally proposed by Becker (1960), and further studied and deepened by scholars such as Porter (1974, pp.603-609), Meyer, Allen (1990, pp.1-18), Batt (2002, pp. 587-596), Yang Dongtao (2004, pp. 140-150), Fang Liluo (1997, pp.41-45), Ling Wengui (2002, pp.40-46), a relatively complete system has been formed and gradually accepted by the business and theoretical circles.

Becker (1998, pp.53-101) defines organizational commitment as the tendency to maintain employee activity consistency generated by unilateral input (side bet), which affects employees’ cognitive attitudes and behaviors towards the company, and thus affects their performance towards the company. In Porter’s definition, organizational commitment is defined as the overall level of employee identification and participation in the organization, and is considered to consist of multiple components, but only emotional commitment, a single dimensional structure.

In short, organizational commitment is a comprehensive reflection of employees’ emotional dependence, identification, and investment in the organization, their understanding of the losses caused by leaving the organization, and their sense of obligation to continue staying in the organization. It is a commitment made by employees to stay in the organization due to the social responsibility formed by long-term social impact. Promise includes loyalty, but it does not equate to loyalty. Loyalty is more of an absolute obedience, and the essence of commitment is the embodiment of an employee’s sense of belonging and work attitude, the display of personal initiative and sense of ownership, and the loyalty and hard work demonstrated by employees to the organization, mainly due to their deep emotional attachment to the organization, rather than material interests. It contains many personal choice tendencies.

Yang Dongtao¹⁰ et al. found through empirical research that emotional commitment is one of the direct reasons for work performance and voluntary resignation. There is a negative relationship between emotional commitment and voluntary resignation, and a positive relationship between emotional commitment and work performance.

Therefore, in this article, we believe that organizational commitment and emotional commitment constitute one dimension, and are reflected by the high or low turnover rate of farmers.

2.3 The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Organizational Commitment

Research has shown that human resource management practices have a positive impact on organizational commitment. Scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive research on this topic, mainly in the following three types: (1) By examining the impact of a certain dimension of human resource practice on organizational commitment, such as Long Lirong et al. (2002, pp.61-66); (2) Human resource practice as a dimension that influences organizational commitment, such as Liu Xiaoping (2002, pp.36-40); (3) Directly examining the impact of human resource practices on organizational commitment, such as Stanley, Batt (2002) Yang Dongtao et al. believe that human resource management systems and practices affect employees' sense of organizational commitment. From the perspective of human resource management systems, multiple characteristics of internal systems (such as internal labor markets; employees have a relatively high sense of employment security, etc.) are strongly consistent with organizational commitment (mainly emotional dimensions).

These studies have demonstrated from different perspectives that human resource management practices, particularly those involving internal promotion, job security, employee safety, training, and skill development, are directly positively correlated with organizational commitment. Even if the starting salary is low, with a higher level of career development and organizational support, a higher promotion rate, and strict entry and exit rules, employees will have a higher level of organizational commitment, resulting in a lower turnover rate; There is a strong connection between human resource practices such as technical training, employee participation in decision-making, and employee security, resulting in strong organizational commitment, low turnover rates, and high work performance.

This article will optimize the human resource management of migrant workers from four aspects: internal career opportunities and promotion, employment security and employee safety, formation of training and participation systems, and appropriate profit sharing plans, in order to enhance their sense of organizational commitment. Emotional commitment will be explained as a dimension, and turnover rate will be measured as a benchmark.

3. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

At present, from the perspective of human resource management practices, there are mainly the following problems in human resource management practices for migrant workers:

3.1 Enterprises tend to prefer external employment and provide less internal career opportunities for migrant workers

Due to the relatively abundant supply of migrant workers in the external labor market, enterprises do not attach importance to human resource management of their own migrant workers and tend to hire them externally; Correspondingly, migrant workers also work with a mentality of exchanging one shot for another, with strong mobility and low organizational commitment. All along, the supply of migrant workers in the market seems to be unlimited. It was only after the outbreak of the so-called labor shortage that it sounded the alarm for enterprises, challenged the practice of human resource management for migrant workers, and enhanced their organizational commitment was put on the agenda.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the particularity of the external supply of migrant workers in the market, it is not conducive to the practical activities of human resource management for migrant workers. The supply of migrant workers in the market is characterized by the coexistence of stable structural labor supply and mobile individual labor supply. Stable structural supply refers to the supply of migrant workers in the market mainly characterized by low quality and low proficiency, narrow job positions, and a stable supply trend. Enterprises believe that the supply of migrant workers is infinite and continuous, therefore, they are unwilling to provide internal career opportunities for migrant workers and prefer to seek external opportunities. Meanwhile, the individual labor supply of liquidity is characterized by poor supply stability of migrant workers in the labor market, seasonal mobility, and frequent job hopping among migrant workers. The supply of migrant worker mobility causes value loss, and migrant worker mobility takes away self performance (Liu and Sui, 2004). That is to say, the goal performance that is consistent with individual and organizational goals is taken away by the mobility of migrant workers, which brings losses to the enterprise. Therefore, enterprises should reflect on the reasons for the high turnover rate of migrant workers from the perspective of their own human resource management.

3.2 Low employment security and tense employment labor relations are the biggest obstacles to the formation and enhancement of organizational commitment among migrant workers.

The tense labor relationship between migrant workers and enterprises generally stems from unreasonable and illegal human resource management practices in enterprises. The main manifestations are: long working hours, no labor contract, and no necessary labor security measures. Enterprises have hardly adopted formal or informal employment security policies to enhance the sense of

security for migrant workers in terms of employment. Therefore, tense labor relations inevitably increase the intention and rate of migrant workers to resign, let alone the cultivation of their organizational commitment.

3.3 Enterprises are unwilling to provide extensive and formal training for migrant workers, and provide them with very few opportunities to participate in management.

Generally speaking, the human resource management system implemented by enterprises for migrant workers is basically a control type. Firstly, in order to pursue maximum cost-effectiveness, enterprises are unwilling to spend time and money on training migrant workers to acquire the skills necessary for their work. At present, the job requirements for migrant workers are demanding and squeezing. In addition, due to low labor security and concerns about the mobility of migrant workers, companies are afraid that their employees will leave after receiving training and become competitors training talents. This has become a paradox. On the one hand, organizations need well-trained human resources, but are constrained by mobility and unwilling to invest in them; On the other hand, due to the lack of contribution from the organization, migrant workers have a lower sense of commitment to the organization, which further exacerbates mobility.

Due to the low cost of labor, manufacturers are unwilling to invest in updating technology and improving the quality of workers. Instead of relying on improving productivity, manufacturers rely on the low cost of labor to maintain the low price competitiveness of their products. Therefore, it is difficult for workers' wages to have room for upward adjustment. This situation is known as a "low technology trap". In fact, the primary reason for this "low technology trap" is the lack of necessary education and training investment for migrant workers. For a long time, most migrant workers have directly entered the non-agricultural industry for employment without training. Even if some migrant workers participate in government organized training, due to the serious formalism in the training, the quality and quantity of training are not high, and fundamentally cannot meet the practical needs of economic development.

This is inseparable from the underestimation of migrant workers in enterprises. Enterprises treat migrant workers as flowing water and wash them away immediately after use, rather than as a resource that can be stored and reused for a long time. For migrant workers, there is no channel to participate in enterprise management and decision-making, and channels such as worker congress and trade unions that provide employees with participation in management are basically closed to migrant workers. Therefore, for migrant workers, the enterprise is the enterprise, and they are themselves. The commitment of the employee organization will not be high.

3.4 Performance evaluation emphasizes a result oriented approach, resulting in unfair distribution.

The performance evaluation of migrant workers by enterprises is generally result oriented, focusing only on the direct results generated by employee behavior. Remuneration often falls into the trap of piece rate wages, requiring workers to put in more labor in order to obtain necessary income. Enterprises generally do not develop profit sharing plans or other long-term incentive forms for migrant workers. This level of compensation is the common income level for migrant workers, and the design of the salary system has not taken into account the incentive effect on migrant workers' salaries, which is difficult to reflect.

In fact, migrant workers, as human capital, or at least possessing human capital, have not received the respect of human capital. Migrant workers who do not receive corresponding compensation incentives will not generate sufficient organizational commitment.

4. OPTIMIZING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS

To improve the organizational commitment of migrant workers, reduce their turnover rate, and improve organizational performance, from an organizational perspective, it is necessary to optimize human resource management practices and elevate human resource management practices targeting migrant workers to a new level.

4.1 Firstly, we need to change our mindset and recognize that migrant workers are also important human resources in organizations, and optimize them from the perspective of human resource management.

Human resources refer to the ability of workers who can drive the overall economic and social development, that is, the ability of the population of working age who have directly invested in construction and have not yet invested in construction. Generally speaking, in the overall population, except for a very small number of people who have lost their labor capacity, all people have human resources. Migrant workers come from rural areas but are active in cities. They consciously or unconsciously contribute their labor abilities, including physical and mental strength, to the development of cities. Through their conscious and purposeful activities, namely labor, they create social wealth. Therefore, from the perspective of human resources, migrant workers are the natural carriers of their labor capabilities. As a group, migrant workers are valuable human resources for enterprises and society.

However, from the history of human resource development and management, various research on human resource development and management both domestically and internationally lacks attention to migrant workers, becoming a blind spot in human resource development and management. From a macro perspective, the reason why human resources theory does not pay too much attention to migrant workers is mainly because most developing countries are troubled by the high growth rate of rural population and the surplus of unskilled rural surplus labor, making rural human resources almost not seen as a driving force for economic development in these countries, but as a burden of social progress. At the micro level, due to the accessibility of migrant workers, most enterprises only use them as cheap labor, and their management remains at the stage of limited carrot and stick. There is a lack of effective human resource management practices, and little consideration is given to enhancing the organizational commitment of migrant workers, resulting in a high turnover rate of enterprise migrant workers.

Therefore, enterprises should first change their mindset and treat migrant workers from the perspective of human resources, rather than temporary workers who come and go immediately.

4.2 Organizations must assume their social responsibility and establish harmonious labor management relationships.

A new function of enterprise human resource management will be to assume the social responsibility of the enterprise towards its employees, including ensuring their employment safety, occupational safety, and income security. As the leading party in labor relations, enterprises should take the initiative to assume necessary social responsibilities and provide extensive job security for migrant workers. At present, the human resources system often attaches importance to performance management, pursues the lowest cost, and believes that providing necessary job security for migrant workers is a cost, thus ignoring the existence of migrant workers as human beings, especially the job security of migrant workers. Enterprises should assume the responsibilities and obligations they should undertake in labor relations, while ensuring the implementation of relevant labor laws and regulations, and demand themselves with higher standards, so that every employee, including migrant workers, can experience a sense of growth, achievement, and belonging in the process of work, achieving a return from “instrumental” to “ontological” nature of human beings. Creating a harmonious partnership between employers and employees within the enterprise, emphasizing the cultural atmosphere of “happy work” and the value concept of result sharing, is the core element of a high-performance work system and the best way to shape employees’ sense of belonging. An increasing number of situations indicate that the quality of labor capital relations

directly affects the internal order of enterprises, as well as the social image and brand value of enterprises, and even directly affects the business performance of enterprises. Integrating labor management into daily human resource management and carefully maintaining it, forming a harmonious labor management relationship within the enterprise, establishing a partnership between employers and employees, providing extensive job security for migrant workers, enhancing their sense of organizational commitment, and winning development momentum for the enterprise, achieving a win-win outcome for both the enterprise and migrant workers.

4.3 Establish a long-term mechanism within the enterprise and strengthen human resource practices targeting migrant workers.

From the perspective of enterprises, it is necessary to establish awareness of human resource development, actively update technology, train migrant workers, improve their quality, strengthen training for migrant workers, force labor upgrading, guide migrant workers to transform from physical to skill oriented, expand channels for migrant workers to participate in management, enhance their sense of organizational commitment, and ensure that migrant workers can find employment in their own enterprises with peace of mind.

Firstly, create opportunities to provide broad and flexible internal career development channels for migrant workers within the enterprise, using internal promotion to motivate and develop migrant workers, and enhancing their organizational commitment. If priority can be given to providing development opportunities for existing migrant workers, their organizational commitment can be enhanced, and the organization can also encourage migrant workers to maintain longer employment relationships with the organization. At the same time, there is no need to repeatedly engage in social recruitment, which can save recruitment costs, reduce the cost of enterprise adjustment, and help cultivate skilled and senior technicians, thereby improving enterprise performance. In addition, establishing such a protected internal career development channel can motivate migrant workers to pay more attention to their own development and skill improvement, in order to create conditions for higher-level development. By actively learning more skills and cultivating good interpersonal relationships with colleagues and superiors, organizational commitment naturally increases.

Secondly, strengthen skill training to help migrant workers improve their own qualities and enhance their sense of organizational commitment. This is beneficial for reducing the turnover rate and retaining excellent employees, skilled workers, and senior technicians. Training is a direct human capital investment activity for employees by organizations. Only by investing in training can organizations truly obtain human resources that meet their own needs and enhance the organizational

commitment of migrant workers. Training for migrant workers is what human resource management practices should pursue. High quality human resources are not naturally formed, but the result of development and investment. The main content is a series of planned activities and processes that explore, cultivate, develop, and utilize human resources. Enterprises should view this issue from a strategic perspective, improve people's quality and abilities, tap into their potential, and strive to maximize their talents. The training content focuses on the development and cultivation of vocational skills, supplemented by guiding training, combining education, training, management and discovery, cultivation, use, and adjustment. During the training process, migrant workers also invest energy and emotions in the enterprise. Becker believes that in organizations, an increase in unilateral investment such as benefits, energy, and skills that can only be used for specific organizations will force employees to continue to stay in the organization, thereby enhancing organizational commitment. Therefore, vocational and technical training for migrant workers can not only enable them to proficiently master the knowledge, skills, and skills required for their profession, promote further productivity improvement, but also increase the dedicated human capital invested in them, and enhance their sense of organizational commitment.

Take various measures to provide opportunities for migrant workers to participate in management. Increasing employee participation opportunities can stimulate employee motivation, which directly affects their level of work effort and thus organizational performance. It is the driving force for employees to create high performance and mobilize their enthusiasm. It can be seen that the human resource management practices of the organization are effective.

4.4 Transform the human resource management system from a control oriented to a satisfaction oriented approach, and enhance the organizational commitment of migrant workers.

Starting from the direct impact of human resource practice on organizational commitment, Yang Dongtao divides human resource practice into two types: control type and satisfaction type. The goal of controlling human resource practices is to improve efficiency and reduce direct labor costs; Having strict work rules and regulations; The reward is based on the amount of output. On the contrary, the goal of satisfying human resource practices is to improve efficiency and productivity; Encourage employees to define organizational goals and achieve them. Human resource practices representing high satisfaction strategies include a series of policies and regulations that influence employee organizational commitment and motivation, such as employees having the opportunity to choose work arrangements; Performance evaluation and fair compensation design

for employee development; Adequate training and development activities. At the same time, in the content of satisfactory human resources practice, performance evaluation oriented towards employee development and salary design that balances efficiency and fairness are more important than employees having the opportunity to choose work arrangements, sufficient training and development activities. According to the research of Yang Dongtao et al., a satisfactory human resource management system is positively correlated with organizational commitment. At present, enterprises generally adopt a control type human resource management system for the management of migrant workers. The basic human resource management method is control, and the method is basically extraction type, such as increasing output through fine quotas, saving labor costs through lower wage levels, improving efficiency through strict supervision, and a single reward method, mainly relying on material rewards, rarely using spiritual incentives. Under such a human resource management system, it is difficult to generate a sense of organizational commitment among migrant workers. Therefore, enterprises should strengthen their human resource management practices, transition their human resource management systems from a control oriented to a satisfactory one, design systems, and provide opportunities for migrant workers to participate in enterprise management and have corresponding voice in the enterprise. They should design a fair and reasonable salary system, conduct performance evaluations for migrant workers, improve their human resource management, and enhance their sense of organizational commitment.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that organizations should continuously improve various specific human resource management practices based on their own strategic, technological, and organizational culture factors, and continuously enhance the combination effect between these activities, in order to continuously improve the motivation and ability level of employees, acquire high-quality employees, effectively enhance the organization's human capital, and enhance organizational commitment, Gain a win-win situation between the organization and migrant workers.

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