Customer-oriented HRM Practices: A Review and Reflections

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Abstract

The objective of this review is to identify and explore customer-oriented human resource management practices of organizations based on the existing literature and reflections. It is widely acknowledged that there is a need to expand the existing body of literature on human resource management (HRM) and customer satisfaction regarding the functions of HRM. The review of the literature indicates that previous studies predominantly concentrated on a limited number of HRM functions, namely training and development, performance management, and reward management when examining the integration of HRM with customer satisfaction. However, it is important to realize that HRM possesses a broader range of possibilities and opportunities for enhancing customer satisfaction within an organizational framework. Hence, this review incorporates diverse functions of HRM to explore the respective customer-oriented HRM practices under those functions. The findings of the review have identified and highlighted several customer-oriented HRM practices under the 12 functions of HRM such as job design, job analysis, human resource planning, recruitment, selection, induction, performance management, training and development, reward management, discipline management, health and safety management and employee relations. Further, identified customer-oriented HRM practices were categorized as customer-oriented competence and attitude-building practices, customer-oriented motivation-enhancing practices and customer-oriented employee involvement practices by using the lens of Ability-Motivation and Opportunity (AMO) theory.

Key Words: Customer Orientation, Customer Satisfaction, Human Resource Management, Practices
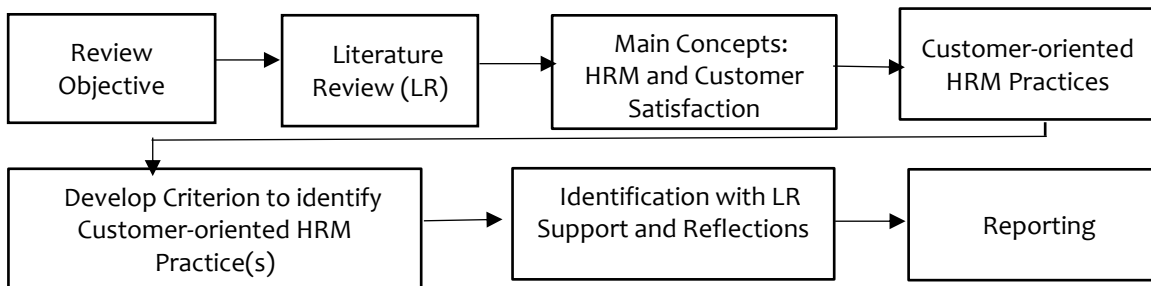
Introduction

Customer satisfaction has been recognized as a driver for enhancing the financial performance of organizations (Chi and Gursoy, 2009; Spinelli and Canavos, 2000, Opatha, 2019). A number of scholars have emphasized the criticality of HRM in attracting, creating, and retaining employees who are focused on customer satisfaction, as employees are treated as the primary stakeholders in boosting customer satisfaction in an organizational context (Browning, 2006; Cantarello, Filippini, and Nosella, 2012; Opatha, 2019). Thus, organizations are in immense necessity to adapt customer-related HRM to guarantee customer satisfaction. However, only a few studies discussed about customer-related HRM in Sri Lankan as well as international contexts (Pantouvakis, 2012; Chang, Chiang and Han, 2012; Chao and Shih, 2016; Opatha, 2019). A study conducted by Thevanes and Opatha (2022), termed HRM that incorporates customer satisfaction as "customer-oriented HRM". Thevanes and Opatha (2022) defined customer-oriented HRM as the "HRM practices that create, maintain, and enhance employees' customer-oriented competencies, attitudes, and customer orientation to finally contribute to customer satisfaction". Organizations can transform normal employees into customer-oriented employees through the implementation of customer-oriented HRM practices. In this context, there is a need to explore customer-oriented HRM practices that have the capacity to attract, create, develop, and retain customer-oriented employees to improve customer satisfaction.

This paper has considered the above considerations in deciding its objectives. Hence, the objective of the review is to explore customer-oriented HRM practices based on the existing literature. With this brief introduction, this paper explains the methodology utilized in conducting the review. It then proceeds to explore customer-oriented HRM practices based on existing literature. The subsequent section classifies the identified practices in accordance with AMO theory. The paper concludes with a concluding remark.

Methodology

In order to achieve the review objectives, a systematic review of literature was conducted by using the archival method as recommended by Tranfield and others (2003). The same methodology was used by the researchers in this field (Jabour and Santos, 2008; Arulrajah, Opatha and Nawaratne, 2015). This review process includes classifying the literature from sources such as journal articles, edited works, and other research papers relating to the review topic, analyzing, reflecting and reporting the findings of the review. This review considers the research works on and related with 'HRM and customer satisfaction' appeared in the literature. This review has used the archival method for data collection, because it enabled the researcher to structure research and build a reliable knowledge base on existing literatures on and related with HRM and customer satisfaction and also applied reflections. The development of this review paper followed the steps presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Methodological Steps of the Review

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┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│ Review   │──► │ Literature│──►│ Main Concepts:│──►│Customer-oriented│
│ Objective│    │Review (LR)│   │HRM and Customer│  │ HRM Practices │
└──────────┘    └──────────┘    │ Satisfaction  │   └──────────────┘
                                └──────────────┘
┌───────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────┐
│Develop Criterion to│──►│Identification with LR│──►│ Reporting│
│identify Customer-  │   │Support and Reflections│   └──────────┘
│oriented HRM        │   └──────────────────┘
│Practice(s)         │
└───────────────────┘
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Based on the objective of this review outlined in the introduction, a literature review was carried out by focusing on the main concepts such as HRM and customer satisfaction. From the main concept, the search for customer-oriented HRM practice(s) was initiated and a criterion was developed. Based on the developed criterion, customer-oriented HRM practices were identified with the support of a literature review as well as the author's reflections. Finally, identified customer-oriented HRM practices were reported with justifications.

Literature Review on Customer-oriented HRM Practices

Customer-oriented Job Design

Job design is concerned with the activities of workers, their duties, tasks required to perform in their work, and how those tasks and duties are structured and scheduled (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2008; Parker and Ohly, 2008). Job design is considered as the first function of HRM as well as one of the high-performance work practices of an organization which contributes to ensure the profitability of the organization (Armstrong, 2009; Opatha, 2009). Further, Certo and Certo (2006) considered job design as a strategy to motivate employees to perform well. Consequently, businesses that concentrate on customer satisfaction need to emphasize the design of their jobs to satisfy the customers. Contemporary organizations need to prioritize the creation of customer-oriented jobs by including customer-centric duties, tasks, and responsibilities. It is crucial to involve all functional managers, including marketing managers and customer relationship managers, in order to acquire their ideas, suggestions, and insights while creating a position that directly deals with customers. customer-oriented jobs need to be designed in a manner to improve the job satisfaction of employees which is essential to boost the customer satisfaction of an organization. With the purpose of providing quality and on-time customer service, many companies design more jobs and increase the number of existing positions (e.g., front office workers) which have the duties, tasks and responsibilities to directly interact with the customers. Prolonged customer waiting time is a common complaint among consumers, posing a critical problem for organizations and adversely affecting customer satisfaction (Borges et al, 2015; Djelassi et al, 2018). In a perfect customer service system, employees should align to satisfy customer demands (Hwang and Kim, 2009). In order to minimize customer waiting time, companies should increase customer-facing job positions. Moreover, implementing the scientific approach while designing customer-centric tasks and duties helps in reducing the job cycle

time (Opatha, 2009). This results in minimizing the waiting time for customers and enhancing their satisfaction, which can be particularly useful for jobs that involve direct customer service.

In recent times, companies have been implementing job enrichment, job enlargement, and job rotation as job design techniques to create jobs that meet the needs of their customers. In their study, Certo and Certo (2006) found that job design techniques, such as job rotation, enlargement, and enrichment, enhance job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational profitability. Applying job enrichment and job enlargement techniques can increase employee participation in customer-oriented activities. Under the job enlargement method, organizations increase the scope of the job by adding customer-centric duties and tasks in addition to their prime duties and responsibilities. In the Sri Lankan context, bank security officers assist customers who lack knowledge on depositing money into the machine. Enriched jobs lead to increased job satisfaction, customer satisfaction and emotional state due to autonomy, meaningfulness, and skill utilization (Woods et al, 2012). Cantarello et al (2012) indicated that job rotation practices enhance the ability of employees to satisfy customers by reducing their anxiety, stress, and boredom while improving job satisfaction through job variation rather than performing certain tasks and duties continuously.

Many organizations use teams to cope with complexity and competition, especially in meeting customers' demands (Dhurup, Surujlal, and Kabongo, 2016). In this context, organizations use teamwork and cross-functional teamwork as high-performance job design techniques to improve customer satisfaction. According to Ueno (2012), a well-functioning team creates a friendly, positive climate and culture to create and retain satisfied customers. Further, teamwork paves the way to develop new products and services by using the creativity and innovative ideas of diversified team members with the aim of customer satisfaction (Ueno, 2012). In an organizational context, employees from diverse functional areas, such as production, marketing, HR, etc. are necessary to work as a team to satisfy the customers. According to Robbins and Judge (2013), when accomplishing a task, a cross-functional team includes employees from the same hierarchical level, although their work areas are different. Contemporary organizations create cross-functional teams for quality and innovative product development, aiming to satisfy and amaze customers. In addition, organizations can also create and utilize self-managed teams and problem-solving teams to satisfy the customers. A self-managed team creates employees who can work without supervision (Cummings and Worley, 2008). Moreover, a problem-solving team consists of 5 to 12 employees from the same department, who meet for a few hours each week to discuss ways of improving quality and efficiency (Robbins and Judge, 2013). Organizations can greatly impact customer satisfaction with self-managed and problem-solving teams.

According to Siddiqi (2015), job crafting can lead to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction by improving employee engagement. Traditionally, job design was seen as a top-down function of managers, who formally designed the jobs of their subordinates. In this context, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) first introduced the concept of job crafting, which converts job design from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach, whereby employees alter the boundaries of their jobs as per their interests, tastes, preferences and qualifications on their own initiative. In most cases, a company has its own organizational

objectives, while employees have their personal desires. Organizations can boost customer satisfaction by providing customer-centric job crafting opportunities to interested and competent employees. As far as existing literature is concerned, it did not clearly specify the practices under the function of customer-oriented job design. However, based on the observations of the industries and organizations as well as the logical belief of the researcher, it is possible to identify certain customer-oriented job design practices. Refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Customer-oriented Job Design

Practices: Customer-oriented job design
1. Creating customer-oriented jobs through adding customer-centric duties, tasks and responsibilities.
3. Deploying job enrichment, job enlargement, job rotation and the scientific method as job design techniques to create jobs to satisfy the customers.
4. Deploying teamwork, cross-functional teams, self-managed teams, problem-solving teams and job crafting as job design techniques to enhance customer satisfaction.
5. Increasing the number of existing positions of job and designing and implementing new jobs which directly deal with the customers in order to minimize the customer waiting time.

Customer-oriented Job Analysis

Job analysis is an essential source of competitive advantage for organizations (Siddique, 2004). Job analysis is the examination of a particular job to understand what specific tasks and responsibilities are involved, as well as what knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) are required to perform that job (Crowell et al, 2011). It provides the information about jobs and job holders and support the HR professionals in the development of 'job description', 'job specification' and 'performance standards' (Siddique, 2004). According to Opatha (2009) job analysis is a primary and major function of HRM which paves the path for the successful performance of other HRM functions as it is considered as the prerequisite of HRM. Therefore, companies that prioritize customer satisfaction should give more attention to identifying and defining the specific duties and responsibilities of customer-centric jobs. Additionally, it is important to identify and define the necessary competencies, attitudes, and qualifications required to perform these jobs successfully in order to achieve the goal of customer satisfaction. In other words, this type of job analysis allows employees to effectively engage with their customer-oriented job by providing a clear job description. Moreover, a job description provides a clear understanding for employees about the importance of customer satisfaction and the specific tasks they need to perform to achieve this objective. On the other hand, a job specification outlines the qualifications and characteristics that a person should possess to effectively perform these customer-centric duties and tasks. In an organizational context, employees directly or indirectly work to satisfy the customers. Hence, it is important to add customer-oriented competencies in addition to their primary competencies to perform their job. Organizations use job analysis to ensure that the right person is selected for job success and customer satisfaction. However, previous studies failed to explore customer-oriented job analysis practices. Hence, researchers explore certain customer-oriented practices based on the observation in the organizations and logical beliefs. Refer to Table 2.

Table 2. Customer-oriented Job Analysis

Practices: Customer-oriented job analysis

1	Identifying and clearly defining the specific customer-centric duties and responsibilities of the job in the job description.
2	Identifying and defining the appropriate competencies, attitudes and qualifications needed to successfully perform the job which aims towards the customer satisfaction in the job specification.

Customer-oriented Human Resource Planning

Companies that prioritize customer satisfaction as their main objective must have the appropriate number of employees, at the right time, to deliver high-quality products or services that meet customer expectations and needs. This is essential in ensuring customer satisfaction. According to Schrager and Delaney (1985), *Human resource planning (HRP) is the effort each organization makes to ensure that it has the right number and types of people in the right jobs at the right time"* which is an essential and proactive approach to ensure customer satisfaction. Contemporary organizations aim to forecast employee numbers and types to improve customer satisfaction. Organizations request employees who intend to leave their job to inform their decision as soon as possible, ideally a month or two in advance. This allows for a smoother transition and ensures uninterrupted service to customers by replacing the departing employee in a timely manner. It is common for organizations to make this a mandatory requirement in their appointment letters. During departmental meetings, department managers are required to submit their human resource plans to forecast and develop strategies to prevent future employee shortages. This is important because employee shortages can have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty in an organizational context.

Organizations adopt several strategies to reduce employee shortages to fulfil customer demands. For instance, service organizations like restaurants and textiles hire seasonal or casual employees in order to cope with the seasonal demands of the customers and satisfy them. Further, organizations may form an expert team which consists of experts from the cross-functional areas, to forecast the future quantitative needs of employees and develop strategies to fulfill the employee shortages and ensure customer satisfaction. As far as existing literature is concerned, it did not clearly specify the practices under the function of customer-oriented human resource planning. However, based on the observations of the industries and organizations as well as the logical belief of the researchers, it is possible to identify certain customer-oriented human resource planning practices. Refer to Table 3.

Table 3. Customer-oriented Human Resource Planning

Practices: Customer-oriented human resource planning

1	Forecasting the number of employees and types of employees to implement the practices and initiatives which aim towards customer satisfaction.
2	Developing and adapting the appropriate strategies to reduce the shortage of employees to fulfill customer demands (e.g., appointing an expert team to forecast the employee requirements).

Customer-oriented Recruitment

According to Wright, Smart, and McMahan (1995), organizations that recruit employees possessing competencies consistent with the organization's current strategies result in favourable performance. The key to customer satisfaction is having the right people and resources at the right time. Organizations which consider customer satisfaction as their prime strategic goal are required to extend their efforts to attract, select and retain customer-oriented employees (Opatha, 2019). In this sense, recruitment has been regarded as the first gateway for establishing and developing a customer-oriented culture through attracting the right (customer-oriented) employees in order to select the best customer-oriented employee(s) with the good selection ratio (Gronroos, 2007; Ueno, 2012; Opatha, 2019). Further, Chebat et al (2002) revealed that the recruitment of customer-oriented employees is considered as one of the key predictors of customer satisfaction. Recruitment is the proactive and cost-effective method of service consumption to rather than developing customer-oriented employees through training and education. Hence, modern organizations should implement an extensive recruitment process to attract the best candidates to ensure customer satisfaction (Opatha, 2019). Attracting talented employees should be the top priority for organizations. To achieve this, they need to establish themselves as an "employer of choice." As a result, organizations often highlight their employer brand in their recruitment messaging. For instance, Intel and Starbucks advertise in Time Magazine featuring employees as valuable brand asset (Whitman, 2009 as cited in Chang et al, 2012). When companies look to hire employees, especially those who will be interacting with customers, it is essential to include clear customer-oriented tasks, duties, and responsibilities in the job description. Additionally, outlining customer-oriented competencies and attitudes in the personal specification can also help attract and motivate the right candidates to apply for the job vacancies. By doing so, companies can ensure that they are recruiting individuals with the necessary qualities to provide excellent customer service. Moreover, Kiger (2002) mentioned the certain specific abilities such as ability to listen, strong sense of customer satisfaction value, ability to work hard on behalf of the customers and etc needed for the customer service employee. Thus, companies can also mention these specific abilities as their requirements in their recruitment messages. Meanwhile, there is a fairly well-grounded assumption that certain types of personalities are best suited to high customer contact services (Bowen, 1996). Therefore, companies are in need to mention the personality requirement of the people they expect in the recruitment messages. These practices are highly efficient and fruitful in recruiting the right people to perform the right things in terms of customer satisfaction. A listing of the existing and certain new HRM practices under the customer-oriented recruitment is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Customer-oriented Recruitment Practices

Authors		Practices
Wagenheim and Dutton, 2008	1	Recruitment of employees should be done with the expectation that every employee be considered as a contributor to customer satisfaction.
Schneider, 1987	2	Attracting to employment opportunities based on their own interests and personalities regarding customer satisfaction.

Chao and Shih, 2016	3	Developing an effective staffing procedure to recruit employee(s) who has (have) the ability to satisfy the customers.
Rogg et al, 2001	4	Paying bonuses for employees who refer qualified applicants who have the ability to satisfy the customers.
Chang et al, 2012	5	Considering the personal traits and values of applicants to recruit employees with person-brand fit.
Chang et al, 2012	6	Indicating the company brand image in the job advertisement to recruit appropriate (customer-oriented) employees.
	7	Emphasize the customer-oriented competencies and attitudes of the job in the wording of employment announcements and in realistic job previews.
	8	Communicating the employer's concern about customers' and employee' satisfaction through recruitment efforts.

Customer-oriented Selection

According to Opatha (2019), *"organization requires right person(s) to provide the right customer service"*. Selection is the process of making the choice of the most appropriate person from the pool of applicants recruited to fill the relevant job vacancy (Opatha, 2009). Thus, selection can be considered as the heart of HRM functions which play a crucial role in fostering customer satisfaction by choosing the right employee(s) from the pool of candidates. Chebat et al. (2002) stated that selection procedures are considered as one of the key predictors of service behavior.

In this context, organizations which consider customer satisfaction as their primary goal need to find, develop and implement appropriate selection methods to select the appropriate people who have the ability to satisfy and retain the customers. "It is very important to have selectors who are right persons in terms of competencies, intelligence and character" (Opatha, 2009, p.214). Owing to this reason, organizations should include marketing and customer relationship managers in the selection committee to choose customer-oriented candidates. Beyond the traditional methods, companies may apply the assessment center and personality test as the selection methods to select the people who concern customer satisfaction by analyzing their customer-oriented attitudes and behaviors in addition to their customer-oriented competencies. Selectors should actively screen job candidates with regard to their degree of customer orientation and empathic abilities (Aggarwal et al, 2005). Further, Homburg, Wieseke, and Bornemann (2009) highlight the importance of using customer orientation as an employee selection criterion. Selectors need to raise more questions toward the candidates in order to check their customer-oriented competencies and attitudes. The selection process needs to be fair to select the right person(s) who has the ability to satisfy the customers (Browning, 2006). In this sense, Chand and Katou (2007) recommended that organizations need to apply the merit-based selection

approach when selecting candidates who directly deal with the customers (e.g., frontline employees). Organizations need to develop effective employee selection instruments that identify candidates who will excel in customer-contact positions over the long run (Donavan, Brown, and Mowen, 2004). A listing of the existing and certain new HRM practices under the customer-oriented selection is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Customer-oriented Selection Practices

Authors		Practices
Donavan, Brown, and Mowen, 2004	1	Having an employee selection instrument to effectively identify the customer-oriented candidate(s)
Chand and Katou ,2007	2	Applying the merit-based selection approach when selecting the candidate(s)
Opatha, 2019	3	Applying psychological tests (e.g., big five dimensions) as the selection methods to select the people who concern customer satisfaction by analyzing their customer-oriented attitude and behaviors.
	4	Including cross-functional experts (e.g., Marketing managers, customer-relationship manager) in the selection committee to select the customer-oriented employee.
	5	Asking more questions toward the candidates in order to check their customer-oriented competencies and attitude.

Customer-oriented Induction

The induction process plays a critical role in determining individual employee performance (Opatha, 2009; Opatha, 2019). Traditionally, induction involves formally introducing new employees to the organization, job, work groups, and environment. A customer-oriented organizational culture is critical for a service firm's success (Parasuraman, 1987). In this context, organizations have the strongest necessity to introduce the customers to the new employees as well as the customer-oriented organizational culture in order to assist the new employees to contribute the organizational success more quickly. The induction process is an opportunity for employees to be provided with information concerning the needs and expectations of the customers. Organizations should ensure that new recruits understand their responsibilities towards customers' satisfaction during the period of induction. Table 6 shows a list of existing and certain HRM practices under the customer-oriented induction.

Table 6. Customer-oriented Induction Practices

Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2019	1	During the induction programme, invite key customers to give speeches or views to the new employees hired.

| Opatha, 2019 | 2 | Include separate items for identifying and understanding customers in the induction programme |
| | 3 | Clearly explain the customer needs and expectations during the induction programme. |

Customer-oriented Performance Management

"Performance management means continuously ensuring that each employee's performance makes sense in terms of the company's overall goals" (Dessler and Varkkey, 2016). Measuring employee performance is a critical part of human resource management, which plays an important role in developing the performance of employees (Opatha, 2009). Proper management of employees' customer-oriented performance is the foundation for creating a customer satisfaction culture that will drive the organization to success. Browning (2006) revealed that performance appraisal has the strongest association with the service behaviour of employees. Thus, many companies develop and implement several performance management techniques to measure employee performance related to customer satisfaction and retention. Wiele et al (2002) stated that organizations positioned the customer satisfaction as a pivotal criterion on determining the employee performance. Therefore, companies are putting customer response as important performance review criterion, taking as high percent of the rating points. In Sri Lanka, some companies measure the employee performance through the customer feedback and comments for their customer service. For example, one of the leading commercial banks in Sri Lanka provides the opportunity to their customers to rate the customer service of the employee through the ratings of poor to excellent. Through that, customer can rate the performance of employees based on the service provided to him/her. It can be considered as the one of the customer-oriented performance management practices of organization which highly contribute to enhance the customer satisfaction.

Performance appraisals are used to give direction to the workforce by clearly communicating organizational goals and informing employees how their need to be performed in order to satisfy and retain the customers (Elmuti, Kathawala, and Wayland, 1992; Nevling, 1992). Activities in the process of performance appraisal seem to have the most influence on service behavior of employees through providing feedback that motivates employees and listening to employees' input for the customer satisfaction (Browning, 2006). Organizations are in a necessity to create and communicate the customer satisfaction performance standards to the employees. Further, organizations may conduct the customer satisfaction audit in order to identify whether employees really put efforts to satisfy the customers or not. In addition to that, Opatha (2019) argued that Management by Objective (MBO) can be an effective performance appraisal technique to improve the employees' performance toward customer satisfaction. Through developing customer satisfaction MBO method, organizations have the opportunity to evaluate the employee job performance in terms of customer satisfaction results such as overall customer satisfaction score, special praises received from customers, customer complaints and etc. Table 7 shows a list of the existing and certain new HRM practices under the customer-orientated performance management.

Table 7. Customer-oriented Performance Management Practices

Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2019	1	Develop the objectives for customer satisfaction and the behaviors that are necessary to achieve them.
Opatha, 2019	2	Develop the Behavioral Observation Scales to evaluate employees according to their behavior toward customer satisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	3	Develop the customer–oriented MBO technique to evaluate the employee performance based on customer satisfaction.
Browning, 2006	4	Providing appraisal feedback to recognize the customer satisfaction efforts of employees.
	5	Conducting customer satisfaction audit frequently.
	6	Evaluate the performance of the customer contact employees through the customer feedback and comments for their customer service.

Customer-oriented Training and Development

According to Opatha (2019), *"organizations require the right people who have the right competencies and attitude in terms of customer service and satisfaction to satisfy and amaze the customers"*. According to Armstrong (2009), "training is a systematic development of the knowledge, skills and attitude required by individual to perform adequately a given task or job". Hence, providing customer-oriented training to the employees is paramount importance to achieve the goal of customer satisfaction. Employees feel that training provides them with the necessary skills to interact with the customer and an understanding of what the customer requires in terms of high-quality service (Browning, 2006). Hence, training makes the employees more confident and positive and makes them to satisfy the customers that will drive the organization to gain the competitive advantage. Keeping the employees up-to-date by continuous training is important to enhance the employees' ability and capacity to satisfy the customers.

Job-related training is considered as the most relevant HRM activity for customer satisfaction (Ott and Dijk, 2005). Job related training contributes to enhance the employee competencies and attitudes to perform their job roles which contribute to provide the quality and speed service to the customers and reduce customer waiting time. Ultimately this trend contributes to customer satisfaction.

Companies should promote a greater customer orientation of employees by offering various training programs, which should not just focus on technical skills (Wu et al., 2012). Customer contact employees (e.g., front line employees) attach to building relationships and personal interaction with customers. Furthermore, Browning (2006) revealed that employees need certain soft skills to deal with the customers which have a key influence over the service behavior of employees. Thus, organization needs to focus more on training and

development in customer-oriented soft skills (e.g., negotiation skills, ability to handle stressful situations and etc) on a regular basis. Training, and in particular multiskilling, improves an employee's sense of competence in dealing with the conflicting demands of customers (Davidow and Uttal, 1989; Peccei and Rosenthal, 1997).

Ensuring customer satisfaction is crucial to retain market share and market leadership. Therefore, it is imperative for employees to continually do their duties to meet the expectations of esteemed customers. Undoubtedly, training focused on customer satisfaction provides the solution for meeting customers' needs. Hence, organizations need to seriously focus on identifying the customer satisfaction training needs through skill gap analysis and appropriate training programs are structured to address the skill gaps identified. Further, organizations can enhance customer-oriented competencies and attitudes through providing continuous training and learning opportunities to employees. These processes are in place to build strong customer relationships which leads to customer satisfaction.

Persuasive communication skills and adequate knowledge of selling techniques can be considered as crucial factors in satisfying customers. Identifying customers' real needs and providing advice to fulfil their needs are the techniques mostly used by customer contact employees to ensure customer satisfaction (Hemantha, 2020). Employee knowledge about the customer's needs will make the customers happy and it will lead to maintain long-term relationships with customers. Further, it is imperative that a customer-oriented employee needs to be a negotiator to bring the negotiation with the customer to a successful end. Thus, an organization needs to provide training on the art of customer dealing to improve customer-oriented skills such as communication skills, negotiation skill, etc. Overall, providing customer-oriented training contributes to improve customer-oriented competencies and attitudes of employees. Further, training makes the customer contact employees more confident and significantly contributes to create and retain satisfied and happy customers. In addition to that customer-oriented training is considered as the motivation factor to improve individual customer satisfaction performance. In overall, customer-oriented training is one of the essential HRM practices that places an employee as an interpreter, advisor and problem solver to the organization's customers. Table 8 shows a list of the existing and certain new HRM practices under customer-oriented training and development.

Table 8. Customer-oriented Training and Development Practices

Authors		Practices
Ott and Dijk, 2005	1	Providing the job-related training to enhance the customer satisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	2	Providing customer satisfaction training to all employees who are directly or indirectly connected with customer satisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	3	Providing customer satisfaction training through Speeches, lectures, booklets, discussions, workshops, seminars etc.
	4	Arranging training sessions to understand the current and future needs of the customers.

| 5 | Identifying the customer satisfaction training needs through skill gap analysis and conduct serious and systematic training programmes to enhance the customer-oriented competencies and attitude to ensure customer satisfaction. |
| 6 | Providing opportunity to everybody to be trained on the art of customer dealing. |

Customer-oriented Reward Management

Even though employees possess knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding customer satisfaction, they should be motivated by the organization to reach maximum customer satisfaction. One of the main tasks the management takes into account is to adequately motivate the employees via implementing a motivation plan based on the organizational culture and the behaviour of the employees. Researchers revealed that employees' satisfaction with organizational rewards is one of the key factors in satisfying customers (Opatha, 2009; Pantouvakis, 2012; Opatha, 2019). Reward management is crucial to create, maintain, and improve employee motivation and commitment to enhance customer satisfaction (Opatha, 2019; Tsai and Tang, 2008). In this context, Opatha (2019) argued that, organization must provide the various financial and non-financial incentives to appreciate the employees who are excellent in terms of improving customer satisfaction and these practices motivate the employees to foster the positive behaviors related to customer satisfaction.

According to Robbins and Finley (1995) revealed that "outdated reward structures are a common reason for employees' dissatisfaction". Thus, contemporary organizations need to consider more on implementing the updated reward systems based on the organizational culture and behavior of employees to encourage the employees to provide the quality customer service. Companies are providing the several types of monetary rewards to motivate the employees who are excellent in satisfying and retaining the customers through their valuable customer service. Companies are financially rewarding for employee good customer satisfaction performance in the form of customer service-based performance incentives, allowances, commission and bonuses (Sarin and Mahajan, 2001; Pantouvakis, 2012). According Chao and Shih (2016), Organizations should maintain differences in pay based on differences in employee performance, particularly with regards to customer satisfaction. Some companies request their customers to rate the service delivery of the employees and review the salary based on the customer satisfaction points. In addition to the financial rewards, organizations are providing non-financial rewards to employees to appreciate their customer satisfaction efforts. Researchers suggested that companies need to set clear career paths and promotion plans as well as welfare facilities for customer-oriented employees based on their annual customer-oriented performance reviews (Chao and Shih, 2016; Wu et al, 2011). In general, customer-oriented employees are fond of recognition and appreciation of their superiors and are inclined to perform better when motivated. Some companies have the practice of communicating the employees' customer-oriented excellence by displaying their achievements (e.g., best salesperson of the month). This enormously vital task makes a big impact on satisfying the customers. Table 9 shows a list of the existing and certain new HRM practices under customer-oriented reward management.

Table 9. Customer-oriented Reward Management Practices

Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2019	1	Providing financial incentives to appreciate employees who are excellent in terms of enhancing customer satisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	2	Providing non-financial incentives to appreciate employees who are excellent in terms of enhancing customer satisfaction.
Chao and Shih, 2016; Wu et al, 2011	3	Setting clear career path and promotion plan as well as welfare facilities for customer-oriented employees based on their annual customer-oriented performance reviews.
	4	Creating a commission structure based on the individual and team effort to satisfy the customers.
	5	Providing incentives to the employees based on the customer satisfaction points.
	6	Communicating employee customer orientation excellence (eg. best sales person of the month)

Customer-oriented Health and Safety

In recent times, health and safety as HRM function, getting more attention after the Covid 19 pandemic situation around the world. Employers are required to focus more on health and safety practices to ensure employees' protection from this pandemic situation (Opatha, 2020). Healthy and safety practices highly contribute to save the lives of employees which are more important than anything at least from the point of HRM.

In an organizational context, employees are playing a major role in determining the customer satisfaction. In order to satisfy the customers, organizations need mentally and physically healthy employees. An employee who is unhealthy is not in a position to take the efforts to satisfy the customers. Instead of that he/she expresses the unpleasant behaviors towards the customers which may be a source of customer dissatisfaction. In this sense, Opatha, (2019) argued that, employees' happiness contributes to customer satisfaction via improving the employees' both mental and physical health which is an essential requirement for employees to satisfy the customers. According to Opatha (2019, p.237), *"Employees who are happy with their life are usually in a positive mood. Employees in a good display friendliness and positive emotions more naturally and frequently, and this friendliness and positive emotions result in positive emotions for customers".* It is possible to enhance the employee happiness through implementing the sound health and safety management system within the organization. Further, it is contributing to amplify the image (employer brand) of the organization (Jackson and Schuler, 2003) which is vital in attracting and retaining the employees who have the potential to satisfy the customers.

The provision of a healthy, comfortable and safe work environment to the employees is considered as the ethical and legal responsibility of employers especially this is a customer

compliance for certain industries (e.g., apparel industry). The safety system and practices of an organization have the ability to reduce the accidents and injuries in the workplace (Armstong, 2009) and lead to mitigate the absenteeism and turnover intension of employees (Opatha, 2009). Further, it highly contributes in providing the continuous customer service via diminishing the problem of employees' shortages owing to unsafe working conditions. Fortunately, there is a growing recognition that the mental well-being of employees has a positive impact on customer satisfaction (Opatha, 2019). In order to maintain the official bond (emotional relationship) with customers, it's a requirement of employees to follow certain principles when dealing with the customers (e.g., welcoming with smile, to show care and concern, make the customer feel good). Possessing the good mental health is highly necessary to follow these customer relationship principles. Workplace stress, frustration, anxiety and job burnout are considered as the serious negative consequences of poor mental-wellbeing of employees (Opatha, 2009) that affect their behavior with respect to customers and contribute to customer dissatisfaction (Pantouvakis, 2012). Hence, organizations are in a necessity to improve the mental health of employees through adapting certain practices such as (1) setup and maintain yoga and spiritual centers within the organization (2) playing the relaxation music in the workplace (3) improving the quality of work life among employees through participative decision making (4) setup and maintain the pleasant (green) working environment and etc (5) taking necessary steps to reduce the bullying and psychological harassment (6) creating the flexible working schedule (7) improving team unity, cohesion and etc. In addition, organizations can adapt certain practices to improve the physical health of employees such as (1) establishing and maintain corporate fitness and recreational centers within the organization (2) constructing and maintain an in-house medical facility and check the health status of employees monthly or frequently and etc. These practices are really useful in creating and retaining the productive and satisfied workforce via improving their mental and physical health which is considered as the fundamental requirement of employees to create and retain satisfied customers to gain the long-term economic benefits. A listing of the existing HRM practices under the customer-oriented health and safety is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Customer-oriented Health and Safety Practices

Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2019	1	Developing strategies (e.g., provide happiness education and counselling, promote job satisfaction and etc) to enhance employee happiness.
	2	Considering the presenteeism of employees while assigning customer-oriented tasks.

Customer-oriented Labour Relations

Labour relations have become a core area in human resource management in modern organizations, and that involves establishing and maintaining positive employee–employer relationships which contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation, morale, discipline, and lead to maintaining a positive, productive, and cohesive work environment (Dessler and Varkkey, 2015). Union support is identified as one of the conditions to formulate and

implement high-performance work system to ensure organizational profitability (Opatha, 2019). In this sense, union support is essential to implement customer-oriented HRM practices to satisfy the customers. In general, management considers customer satisfaction as their one of the primary organizational goals. Equally, join efforts of trade union is also necessary to achieve customer satisfaction in an organization. Tripathi (1992, P. 467) observes that "*good industrial relations mean the absence of disputes between the two parties (management and unions) and existence of understanding, co-operation and partnership between them*". How top management handles the relationship with trade unions is one of the determinant factors of customer satisfaction. Owing to any conflicts with the management, if the trade unions are involved in any industrial disputes (e.g., strike, work to rule, picketing etc), organizations will not be able to satisfy customers' demands on time and ultimately it will be a reason to create worse effects on customer satisfaction (Opatha, 2009). For instance, if the lecturers' union is involved in a strike due to any industrial conflict, it will directly affect students' education. Hence, satisfying the customers in an uncertain time requires a great deal of union co-operation and active participation. Therefore, developing and maintaining harmonious employer-employee relationships is considered as a crucial factor for customer satisfaction as well as overall organizational success. Finally, the collective and collaborative engagement in the work of both management and union is undoubtedly vital to satisfy the customers. The existing and certain new HRM practices under customer-oriented employee relations are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Customer-oriented Labour Relations Practices

Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2009	1	Check union actions such as strike, picketing etc and develop the strategies (eg. sub-contracting) in advance to satisfy the customers' demands on time.
	2	Maintaining good labor management relations through applying the mechanisms of collective bargaining and joint consultation
	3	Consider union as the partners in customer satisfaction
	4	Appoint representatives from union in the customer satisfaction suggestion teams.
	5	Educate and train union members on customer satisfaction.

Customer-oriented Discipline Management

Employee discipline management is defined as the "systematic process of controlling and influencing all employees in the organization to achieve and maintain standards of behaviour (rules of behaviour, alternatively the code of behaviour at work) in order to accomplish organizational goals and objectives" (Opatha, 2009). In this context, organizations need to apply customer-oriented discipline management practices in order to avoid the deviant behavior and foster the customer-oriented behaviors to satisfy the customers. Nowadays, organizations have realized "discipline management" as a tool to self-regulate employees to satisfy the customers. According to Opatha (2019, p.390), *employees*

who are poor in customer satisfaction and who are wrong need to be identified and punished through establishing a good fair disciplinary procedure in order to reform offenders, deter others similar customer dissatisfaction behavior and make the relevant rules of discipline effective. Harrison-Walker (2001) recommended that companies need to consider more on welcoming the customer complaints in order to reduce the negative consequences such as low repeat-purchase levels and negative word-of mouth. Further, companies are collecting the customer feedback about the employees' customer service. Based on the customer complaints and customer feedback, if any employees contribute to customers' dissatisfaction through their deviant behaviors, he/she will be punished by the company according to disciplinary rules and regulations. Opatha (2009, p.390) suggested that punishments or disciplinary actions may include non-serious ones such as oral warning, written warning, fining erious ones such as stoppage of salary increments, demotion and dismissal. Table 12 shows a list of the existing and certain new HRM practices under the customer- oriented discipline management practices.

Table 12. Customer-oriented Discipline Management Practices

| Authors		Practices
Opatha, 2019	1	Identify and punish the employees who are poor in creating and enhancing customer satisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	2	Develop and implement a good and fair disciplinary procedure to handle the employees who contribute to customer dissatisfaction.
Opatha, 2019	3	Formulate and communicate the rules and regulations for activities which contribute to customer dissatisfaction.
	4	Place the customer complaint box in order to collect employee's deviant behaviors.
	5	Take disciplinary actions based on customer feedback and customer complaints after investigating the authenticity and accuracy of the complaints.

Classification of customer-oriented HRM practices in the light of AMO Theory

Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) theory is originally developed by Appelbaum et al. (2000). It is a performance theory suggesting that individual's performance depends on the abilities, motivation and opportunities. The customer-oriented HRM and resulting customer-oriented outcomes can be better comprehended in light of AMO theory, which is the most dominant theory in understanding the impact of HRM practices on organizational performance in empirical studies (Appelbaum, 2000; Boselie et al, 2005). AMO theory explains that High-Performance Work Practices (HPWS) are a set of distinct but interrelated HR practices that are grouped based on three core aspects: ability, motivation, and opportunity (Appelbaum, 2000). Ability–Motivation–Opportunity theory (Appelbaum et al, 2000) suggests that HRM practices contribute to enhance the organization's human capital through uplifting the employees' competencies. Based on the AMO theory researcher predicts that customer satisfaction depends on the employees' abilities, motivation and opportunities regarding the customer satisfaction. In general, ability includes knowledge,

and skill to do something in an efficient and effective way (Collins Birmingham University English Language Dictionary, 1987). However, Opatha (2019) revealed that, employees need right attitude with regard to customer satisfaction beyond the customer-oriented competencies to become the successful employees in terms of customer satisfaction. Thus, abilities here defined as employees' customer-oriented competencies and attitudes to successfully perform the customer-centric tasks and duties. Researcher argued that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation pave the way to improve the individual job performance of employee. Intrinsic motivation is defined in this context as the doing of the activity of making customers satisfied for its inherent satisfaction of making people happy rather than for an external reward or punishment. Extrinsic motivation is the act of exerting effort to fulfil customer satisfaction to obtain both financial and non-financial rewards, while also avoiding punishments. Opportunity here defined as practices implement by the organization to foster employee participation in customer-oriented activities.

Abilities are based on a set of practices including recruitment, selection, induction and training and development programs that ensure customer-oriented competencies and attitudes required of employees to perform customer-oriented tasks and duties. Similarly, motivation is based on practices such as performance management, reward management, and discipline management that are meant to boost the efforts of employees to satisfy the customers. Lastly, opportunity is a bundle of practices comprised of job design, job analysis and employee relation practices that foster employee active participation in activities which are aimed at customer satisfaction. Using the lens of AMO theory, researcher proposed that customer-oriented HRM practices that enhance employee competencies and attitude about customers, their motivation to do work and involvement in available opportunities lead to enhance the customer-orientation of employee, which ultimately contribute to customer satisfaction. Hence, customer-orientation of employee acts as an underlying mechanism between customer-oriented HRM and customer satisfaction. This study developed the below conceptual model based on the AMO theory.

Figure 2. Classifying Customer-oriented HRM practices based on AMO theory
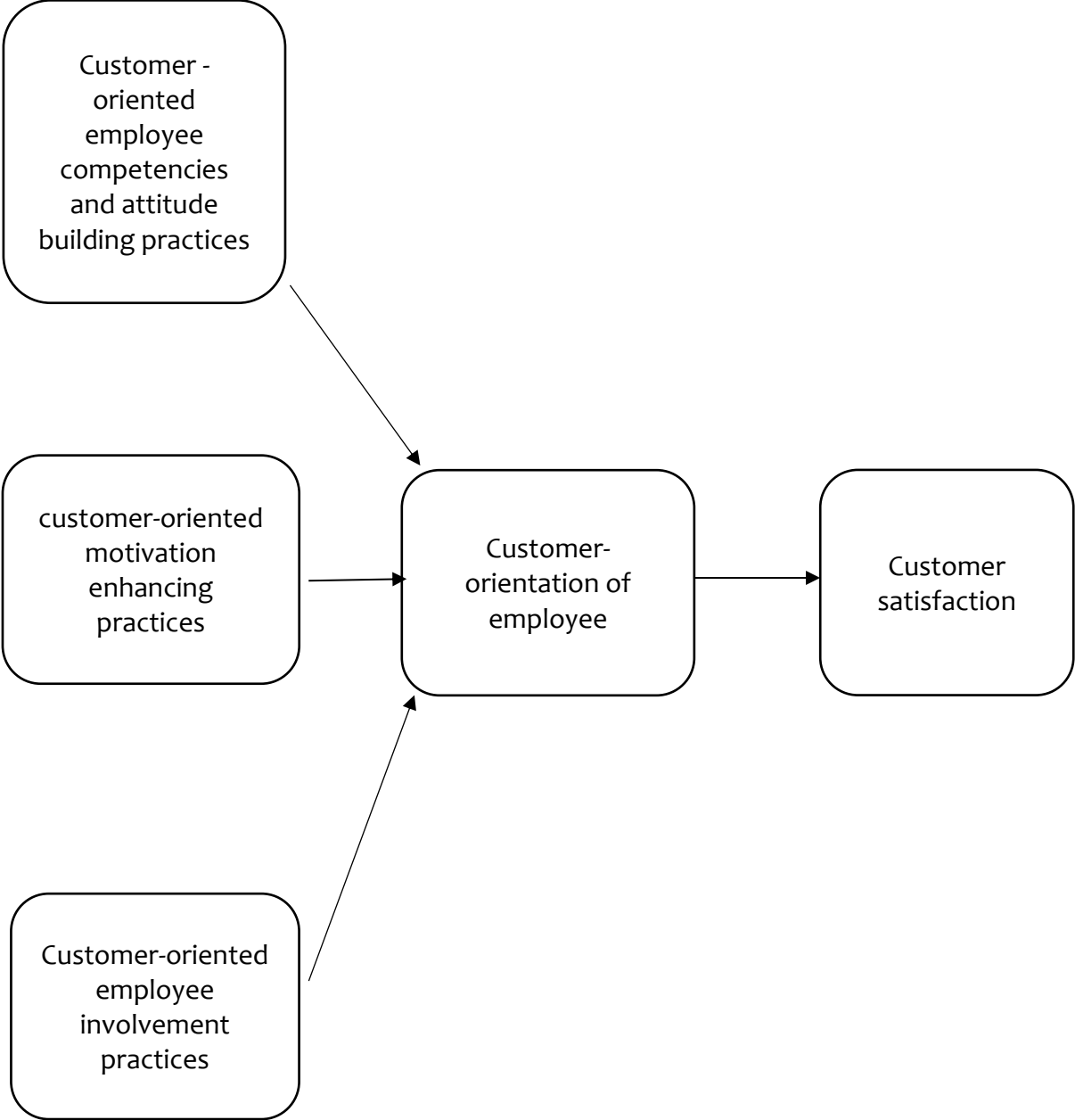
Table 13. Summary of Customer-oriented HRM Practices based on AMO Theory

Customer-oriented competence and attitude building practices	Customer-oriented motivation enhancing practices	Customer-oriented employee involvement practices
Recruitment • Communicate the firm's concern about customer satisfaction through the recruitment efforts. • Include customer satisfaction criteria in the recruitment messages/advertisements.	**Performance Management** • Develop performance appraisal techniques (e.g. behavioral observation scale, customer oriented MBO method etc) to evaluate employees according to their behavior toward customer satisfaction. • Provide appraisal feedback to each employee in order to recognize their customer satisfaction efforts.	**Job design** • Create customer-oriented jobs through adding customer-centric duties, tasks and responsibilities. • Increase the number of existing positions of job and design and implement new jobs which directly deal with the customers in order to minimize the customer waiting time.
Selection • Has an employee selection procedure to effectively identify the customer-oriented candidate(s). • Apply psychological tests (eg. big five dimensions) as the selection methods to select the people who concern about customer satisfaction by analyzing their customer-oriented attitude and behaviors.	**Reward Management** • Provide financial and non-financial incentives to appreciate employees who were excellent in terms of enhancing customer satisfaction. • Involve in setting clear career paths and promotion plans as well as welfare facilities for customer-oriented employees based on their annual customer-oriented performance reviews.	**Job Analysis** • Identifying and clearly defining the specific customer-centric duties and responsibilities of the job in the job description • Identifying and defining the appropriate competencies, attitudes and qualifications needed to successfully perform the job which aims towards the customer satisfaction in the job specification.
Induction • Invite key customers to give speeches or views to the new employees hired. • Include a separate item for identifying and understanding	**Discipline Management** • Enforce punishments to the employees who had behaved in the way that made the customers dissatisfied. • Place the customer complaint box in order to collect employee's deviant behaviors.	**Labour relations** • Consider union as the partners in customer satisfaction • Appoint representatives from union in the customer satisfaction suggestion teams.

customers in the induction programmes.

Training and Development

- Provide the job-related training to enhance the customer satisfaction.
- Identified the customer satisfaction training needs through skill gap analysis.
- Provide opportunity to everybody to be trained on art of customer dealing.

- Educate and train union members on customer satisfaction.
- Encouraging employees to make suggestions to satisfy the customers.

Concluding Remarks

Since they work directly with customers, employees are the most important stakeholders in guaranteeing customer satisfaction. Although employees are very important assets in any organization (Opatha and Ismail, 2001), employees who do not possess right competencies, are not adequately motivated, and are not provided with opportunities to contribute will become liabilities and disruptive to the pursuit of organizational success and growth through increased customer satisfaction by employees. The implementation of human resource management ensures to possessing the ability to attract and retain employees in order to effectively accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization. Contemporary organizations have the challenge of discerning and executing human resource management (HRM) practices that possess the potential to enhance customer satisfaction by enhancing employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities. In order to increase customer satisfaction, it is possible to infer that customer-oriented human resources management practices have the ability to transform normal employees into customer-oriented employees. Organizations can improve customer satisfaction through implementing the above-identified customer-oriented HRM practices. The aforementioned customer-oriented HRM practices have enormous potential to attract, develop, and retain customer-oriented employees who genuinely serve customers to guarantee satisfaction with service. Moreover, this research is distinctive in its categorization of customer-oriented HRM practices within the framework of the AMO theory. The findings of the review point to the necessity of understanding how customer-oriented HRM practices affect employees' motivation to participate in raising customer satisfaction, how organizations foster customer-oriented abilities, and how they provide opportunities to employees to boost customer satisfaction. Thus, identified customer-oriented practices were categorized as customer-oriented competence and attitude-building practices, customer-oriented motivation enhancing practices and customer-oriented employee involvement practices by using the lens of AMO theory. This study will be useful in reducing the practice-research gap for future researchers and practitioners. Researcher proposes that customer-oriented HRM is a potentially significant field within HRM; yet, the body of research in this area is surprisingly limited. In order to give a comprehensive understanding of customer-oriented HRM, more research is required.

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