

Building Better Elections: The Role of Human Resource Management Practices

Abstract

Organising an election is a huge logistical challenge which involves the recruitment and management of an enormous workforce. Despite the many well-run elections, it is no surprise that electoral integrity is often undermined by individual errors, poorly designed management systems or the poor use of technology (James 2014, forthcoming; Montjoy 2008; Norris 2015). Yet there is very little information about the staff that run elections and the recruitment, training and management practices in place. This paper provides a provisional analysis of the first ever international surveys of electoral management bodies (n=85) and electoral officials (n=1,868). Firstly, it provides new information about the workforce sizes, before profiling the demographic and educational characteristics of personnel within 33 electoral management bodies. Secondly, it describes the human resource management practices (HRMP) that are used and the experiences of employees. Thirdly, after developing hypotheses from the human resource management literature, it tests for the effects of these on electoral management body performance. On balance, initial analysis suggests that HRMP such as recruitment and training can have small effects on performance. Strong evidence was found showing the close relationships between employee outcomes such as stress, work overload and job satisfaction, but the link to performance was weak with the exception of propensity to quit. Other notable findings included significant gender biases within EMB workforces.

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Toby S. James

University of East Anglia

t.s.james@uea.ac.uk

www.tobysjames.com



1. Introduction

Holding regular elections is a prerequisite for being a democratic state. However, while many elections are conducted across the world to a high standard, there is evidence of problems with the management and implementation of elections in many established and transitional democracies (Alvarez, Atkeson, and Hall 2012; James forthcoming; Lehoucq 2003; Norris 2015; Norris, i Coma, and Gromping 2016). This should not be surprising because conducting an election is a huge logistical challenge that involves the complex management of people, technology and resources. Yet very little is known about the armies of state employees who are responsible for managing this process. While a plethora of literature has sought to explore the factors that can affect individual and organisational performance in the private sector and some public services, there has been no cross-national study of the managers of elections. Those responsible for implementing one of the most important administrative processes that the state regularly undertakes have been overlooked.

This paper therefore seeks to contribute to the relatively new literature on electoral management by reporting on the first ever cross-national surveys of EMB staff. For the first time, workforce sizes, characteristics and motivations are identified around the world. Moreover, the paper reports on the human resource management practices (HRMP) that used to motivate those working in electoral management boards (EMBs) and their experiences of working within them. Drawing from AMO theory, a school of thought based within management studies, hypotheses are derived about the HRMP and employee outcomes (EOs) that are expected to improve EMB performance and deliver better run elections. These are then tested with the dataset.

Part 2 of the paper reviews the existing literature on electoral management and EMB workforces. Part 3 introduces theory on why HRMP and EOs should affect organisational performance before Part 4 develops the hypotheses. Part 5 describes the methods, Part 6 the results and Part 7 draws out the conclusions. It should be noted that the results presented in this paper are provisional as further data is coming in.

2. Existing Research on EMB Performance and Workforces

Research on elections has traditionally focused on trying to explain voting behaviour or the consequences of electoral systems. A new research agenda has been established on the *public administration and management of elections* (James, forthcoming). This emphasises that elections are like other public services, such as schools and hospitals, which have differing levels of performance and efficiency. Elections involve more than just designing and passing electoral laws. They require successful management and implementation. Electoral registers need to be drawn up and maintained; polling stations found and organised; counting staff need to be recruited and the counting process run without error. Cross-national data shows variation in the quality of electoral management around the world (Coppedge 2017; Norris, i Coma, and Gromping 2016) and even within countries (Norris et al. 2016). The quality of electoral management matters immensely because it can undermine citizens' confidence in the electoral process in established democracies (Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Claassen et al. 2008; Claassen et al. 2012; Hall, Quin Monson, and Patterson 2009) threaten democratic consolidation or cause electoral violence in emerging democracies (Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Pastor 1999; Snyder 2013) or even affect the result (Wand et al. 2001). Policy makers have therefore expressed increased concern and interest (Bauer and Ginsberg 2014; Global Commission on Elections 2012). Research has therefore increasingly sought to assess the effects of policy tools such as formal-legal independence (Birch and Van Ham 2017; van Ham and Lindberg

2015), funding (Clark 2014, 2016; James and Jervier 2017), policy tools such as benchmarking (James 2013) and centralisation (James 2017).

There has been relatively little focus on the people involved in delivering elections. It has been noted that some countries struggle with a short supply of poll workers if they are recruited on a voluntary or low paid basis (Burden and Milyo 2015). Research has begun to identify the factors that may cause workers to volunteer their time on election-day (Clark and James 2016b; Glaser et al. 2007; Herron, Boyko, and Thunberg 2016). Less is known about the permanent workforces involved in managing elections, however. James (forthcoming) profiles the characteristics of the UK workforce based on a survey undertaken in 2016 and shows evidence that reforms made to electoral registration processes can lead to high levels of stress and many electoral officials to consider quitting. High levels of stress were also reported in the UK immediately before the Brexit referendum when IT problems led to the voter registration system being offline as the deadline passed (Clark and James 2016a). Attempts to centralise electoral management have been linked to motivational loss amongst local officials (James 2017) while the use of benchmarking has been found to be a useful tool for increasing local compliance (James 2013). No cross-national studies have explored and compared the characteristics of workforces running elections, however.

3. AMO Theory and the Role of Human Resource Practices

This paper explores the effects that human resource management practices (HRMP) can have on electoral management. HRMP are a range of management initiatives that are used to make improvements individual and organisational level performance. They might include de facto procedures on recruitment, training, performance appraisal and pay (Appelbaum et al. 2000). HRMP are thought to be important for organisational performance is because they can affect the micro-level behaviour of the individual employee. This, in turn, affects organisational performance such as turnover, productivity, financial returns, survival and firm value (Delery 1998).

The subject is approached through a diverse range of disciplines, including economics, organisational behaviour, public policy and management. And yet at the same time, a common complaint is that there remains limited research linking practices to outcomes such as organisational performance. There are some single country studies (Melton and Meier 2017; O'Toole Jr and Meier 2003, 2009), but as Gould-Williams and Mohamed noted 'there appears to be no direct international comparative studies in which the effects of HR practice on individual employee outcomes has been empirically tested' (Gould-Williams and Mohamed 2010, 654). Some research has mapped the effects of HR practices onto organisational outcomes, measured by profit or shareholder value per employee. But this was criticised for not considering the actual implementation of HR practices – "the black box problem". More thought should be given, argued Becker and Gerhart, over twenty years ago, into 'finding out what managers are thinking and why they make the decisions they do' (Becker and Gerhart 1996, 794). A 'black box approach' therefore emerged.

An important theme in the research is that stated organisational intentions should be separated from the actual employee's experience. Organisations may have great intentions to implement practices set out in formal policy documents. But they may not have the resources, opportunity or ability to do so. As Kinnie et al. (2005, 11) argue: 'the fulcrum of the HRM-performance causal chain is the employees' reactions to HR practices as experienced by them.' Wright and Nishii (2007) argue that the pathway is from (1) intended practices, (2) actual HR practices, (3) practices as experiences, (4) employee outcomes (5) employee reactions; and then (6) unit level performance.

One debate that persists is whether there is a universal set of HRMP which universally produce better performance – or whether there more bespoke practices are needed for different contexts. A ‘best practice’ school of thought suggests that there are practices that should be adopted in all organisations, in all settings to improve performance. These practices can have an additive effect that create synergies and ‘added value’ within organisations. There are many lists of best practices. Pfeffer (1998) presents a list of 7; Arthur (1994) presents 4; Boselie, Dietz, and Boon (2005) propose 26. A common theme is that complementing ‘bundles’ of HRMP work well together because synergies occur, but that there are also commonly ‘deadly combinations’ such as designing the workplace so as to improve team-work but also rewarding individual performance (Becker et al. 1997).

Boxall and Purcell (2011) conclude that ‘it is difficult to see the underpinning logic in such a long list of practices’. The ‘best practice’ model has therefore been subject to critique. There is some scepticism about whether there are a single set of practices that can be used in all contexts. Different sectors, production processes and cultural environments may require employees to be managed differently. A counter-veiling ‘best-fit’ approach is therefore often prescribed.

The most common theory that is used to justify the causal linkage between HRMP practices and organisational performance outcome is the *Ability, Motivation and Opportunity (AMO)* model. This was first developed by Bailey (1993) and then extended by Appelbaum et al. (2000). It can be considered a ‘best practice’ toolkit in so far as it argues that the selection of HRMP will improve performance. The logic is that HRMP can develop the *ability* of individuals within organisations by ensuring high quality recruitment processes, and investing in training and skills development. Secondly, the HRMP can increase the *motivation* of employees through good financial incentives and conditions. Intrinsic awards such as employment security, performance reviews and work-life balance can also be important, however. Thirdly, HRMP can provide employees with the *opportunities* to be able to use these skills and motivations within the organisation. In combination, these produce an environment in which positive discretionary effort is higher. Employees have significant discretion in the amount of care and additional time they invest into their job. Boxall and Purcell (2003) argue that the presence of AMO practices is additive. Each antecedent will have a direct and independent effect on performance which can be understood through the formula:

$$P = f(A+M+O)$$

AMO will be used as the theoretical framework for this paper. However, it is important to note that other de facto HRMP are also thought to be important in mediating the effectiveness of AMO practices on performance. These include *performance appraisal*. Poon (2004), for example, finds that when performance appraisals are not perceived by the employee to be political, job satisfaction increases. The quality of internal *communication* within organisations has been found to improve performance (Gould-Williams and Mohamed 2010). Communications has been claimed to be especially important during times of change (Elving 2005) and for encouraging supportive workplace environments (Elving 2005). *Psychological climate* is repeatedly found to be important. Gould-Williams and Mohamed (2010, 656) state that there ‘is now growing recognition that employees’ experiences at work are affected by organizational characteristics such as support, recognition, fairness, morale, rewards equity and leader credibility.’ Psychological climate therefore involves ‘an individual’s experiential abstraction of his/her routine experiences at the workplace, and the consequent sense-making of the same’ (Biswas and Varma 2007, 666). It is therefore measured at the individual level and is a different concept to organizational climate or organizational culture. *Discretionary pay* was found by a review of studies to increase performance (Hasnain and Pierskalla Henryk 2012). Lastly, *team working* within an organisation has been found to have positive effects on performance to such an extent that that Gould-Williams and Mohamed (2010, 671) argued that ‘it could be argued that teamworking should

be regarded as the 'kernel' of HR bundles'. These will therefore also be included in the study as control variables.

Employee Outcomes in Organisations

Tackling the 'black box problem' requires us to zoom in on the experiences of employees. Employees have discretionary behaviour and varied levels of organisational citizenship (Kinnie et al. 2005, 10). It is therefore essential to identify the experiences of employees, how HRMP affect them, and how these relationships affect performance. This allows a further level of sophistication in the analysis: how different properties of employee outcomes, HRMP and organisational culture interact. Those employee outcomes (EOs) that are commonly thought to affect organisational performance, but also be important in their own right are: stress, work overload, intention to quit, job satisfaction, affective commitment and civic duty.

Stress has been defined as 'a harmful reaction people have due to undue pressures and demands put on them at work' (HSE 2013, 2). Maslach and Jackson (1981, 99) first defined the concept of burnout which involves a 'syndrome of emotional exhaustion and... cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients.' Burnout was found to be associated with poorer quality of care, higher turnover and absenteeism, lower morale. Although burnout was initially thought to be a problem in jobs involving 'people-work,' subsequent research found it to be present in other occupational groups (Schutte et al. 2000). Not all stress is bad, it should be noted. In certain circumstances it can have healthy positive outcomes (Nelson and Simmons 2003). Nonetheless, most research focuses on the negative effects. Organisational performance and productivity can decline; absenteeism and staff turnover can increase (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2014, 12).

Work Overload is thought to lead to stress burnout, an erosion of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and propensity to quit (Bakker and Demerouti 2007; Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke 2004; Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Ahola 2008). There are also links with reduced civic mindedness, demotivation and performance (Gould-Williams et al. 2014; Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). The *propensity of individuals to voluntarily quit* is often thought to have a negative effect on overall performance. Resources are diverted to recruitment and training new staff, knowledge and expertise is also lost. However, a counter-argument is that benefits are accrued such as lower payroll, improvement in innovation and reductions in stagnation (Dess and Shaw 2001). *Job satisfaction*, meanwhile, was famously defined as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (Locke 1976). This has been found to affect the likelihood that an individual would quit (Tzeng 2002) but also organisational outcomes such as customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, employee turnover (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes 2002).

Other EOs are thought to be important mediators in these relationships. *Affective commitment* is the attachment that an employee has to their organisation (Allen and Meyer 1990; Shore et al. 2006) and can mediate burnout and intention to quit (Sharma and Dhar 2016). *Civic duty* or public service motivation refers to whether an individual is motivated to working in 'primarily or uniquely in public institutions or organisations' (Perry and Wise 1990, 368). This is thought to be an important mediator between HRMP and employee outcomes including whether they intend to quit, job satisfaction and their affective commitment (Gould-Williams et al. 2014).

4. Research Questions Hypotheses

This paper seeks to address five core questions:

- What are the workforce sizes, demographic characteristics and motivations of EMB staff?
- What human resource practices are in place? Do they approximate 'best practices' as set out by AMO theory?
- What are the employee outcomes?
- What is the relationship between AMO, HRMP and EO?
- What is the relationship between AMO HRMP, EO and organisational performance?

Drawing from AMO theory and the broader literature discussed above on human resource management, three core hypotheses are developed:

H1: The use of HRMP 'best practices' to improve ability, motivation and opportunity will positively affect electoral management performance of the electoral management board.

H2: Key employee outcomes will positively related: work overload, job satisfaction, propensity to quit and stress.

H3: Employee outcomes will also be positively related electoral management performance.

The model that is developed is therefore summarised by figure 1 below.

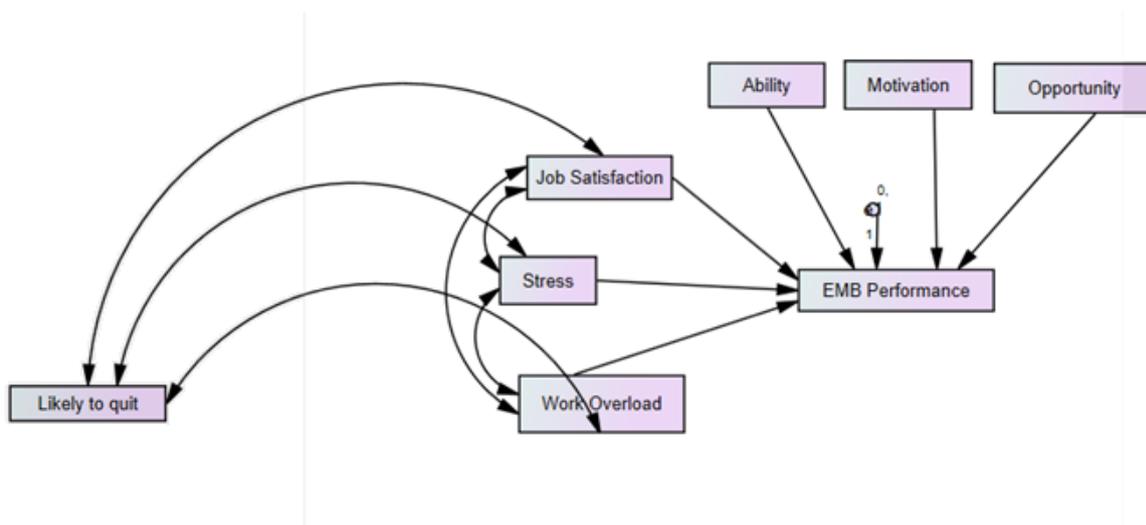


Figure 1: Predicted relationships between HRMP, EO and organisational performance

5. Methods

Two cross-national surveys of electoral management boards were undertaken. The surveys captured institutional-level data such as the budget, number of staff and institutional structure. One component of the surveys asked individual employees about their demographic and educational background, alongside information about the experiences of HRMP and EO. Surveys were translated into 33 languages.

The Electoral Management Survey ('EMS') was designed administered by the author and colleagues in Europe (James et al. 2017). The survey design captured data on EMPR and EO and was based on batteries of standard questions used by Gould-Williams and Mohamed (2010) and Gould-Williams et al. (2014). Seven-point Likert scales were used. A sister survey was administered by the Electoral Integrity Project, called ELECT, to non-European countries which included similar questions (Karp et al. 2016). The ELECT survey was based on the EMS survey but some questions were removed or changed in their wording. Non-European countries which didn't respond to the ELECT survey were then followed up with the EMS. All data was collected between July 2016 and September 2017. In combination, there are currently 1,868 responses from electoral officials from 70 countries, but more data may come in before the final deadline.

In some countries, electoral management is highly centralised. A survey facilitator was therefore identified to send on the survey to all employees within the organisations. Contact email lists were requested for local EMBs in states where electoral management was decentralised and local organisations were emailed directly asking them to circulate emails with links to the survey. The sampling methods were therefore non-probabilistic, and based on organisations and individuals volunteering to take part. There is therefore a risk of a response bias in the sample, but this risk is impossible to eliminate. Other sampling methods, such as emailing every 10th employee would have produced a much lower response rate, proved logistically impossible to implement and there would have been no guarantee that it would have been more representative either.

The key dependent variable in this study is organisational performance. There are a variety of ways in which performance can be measured and any measure is inevitably controversial (James forthcoming). The implementation of elections can be flawed in a variety of ways, but the focus here is on *technical performance* of electoral management. We are not therefore looking to evaluate whether elections within the polity fit with democratic theory, comply with international standards because much of this will be out of the control of the electoral authorities. Instead, this paper looks at whether they successfully implemented the law The Perception of Electoral Integrity 4.5 dataset was used. This is an expert based survey that has been used in a variety of settings (Martínez i Coma and van Ham 2015). The question taken as the dependent variable was 'The election authorities performed well' which was on a five-point scale. The latest electoral event before the surveys were undertaken was used. This was published in August 2016 and included elections up until the first half of 2016. Where two electoral events were in the dataset, the latest was used, which could have been presidential or legislative.

Organisational level data from the EMS will be published (except where EMBs have asked for it not to be). For ethical reasons personnel data will not be published, however, to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents. The workforce sizes are often so small in many cases that individuals might be identifiable and there could be serious consequences for their careers or personal safety. The names of countries are therefore often not always given in the analysis below.

6. Results

Workforce sizes, characteristics and motivations

Combining data from the EMS and ELECT, it is possible to make new insights on the overall workforce characteristics. The workforce size within EMBs varies enormously, as Figure 2 demonstrates. The

largest workforces found were 15,000 in Mexico's Instituto Nacional Electoral followed by 4,000 in Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission. But most countries do not have a large national body running elections – rather there tends to be a few lightly staffed central organisations. The Swiss Federal Chancellery Political Rights Section, for example, explained that there are 10 permanent staff members on the national level, but 'not all of them are responsible for the elections of the National Council. There are about 2-3 persons who concentrate on the elections.' In Norway, only 4 members of staff were in the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, but the Norwegian Directorate of Elections employed another 21.

These small permanent teams can be explained by many factors. Firstly, small national workforces are then bolstered by large temporary teams. For example, the Indonesian Election Commission for the West Java Province only has 40 permanent employees, but boosts its strategic management team size to 2,732 at election time, and these managers oversee a team of over 336,000 employees including poll workers. Secondly, staff are often located in local communes or government. The total Swiss staff size grows to include 40-70 regional members of staff and 2,300 in the local Communes. In Croatia, there are 23 permanent staff in the State Electoral Commission, but there are 576 county, city and municipality electoral commissions. These are ad hoc bodies established for each election (although some staff members remain each time). In total 3,456 staff are therefore involved in the election. Thirdly, low permanent staff sizes can be a result of the fact that there are many organisations involved in running elections. In Malta, for example, the electoral register is effectively compiled by Identity Malta, and organisation that is not traditionally considered as an EMB (and declined to reply to the survey as a result). The staffing costs are therefore partially 'hidden' and shared between many organisations.

local elections. This compares to 2.90 and 2.07 in ELECT. As one Danish respondent explained, some people have worked in elections for a very long time and have seen major changes: 'I started helping in the 1980's and then it became more and more responsibility. Today I am the main manager, but by the 2018 elections I will leave' (sic). There is considerable variation across countries, however with a comparison of means revealing a range from 7.26 to 2.5.

ELECT data suggested that in most cases the people running elections (75.4 per cent) applied to do so. Only 10.3 were asked to apply and 5.1 were assigned. Data from the European survey asked more detailed questions about the motivations of the employees. A desire to work in the public's interest was the highest stated reason. Job stability was rather higher than career prospects and competitive remuneration. Most respondents self-rated themselves towards the centre of a ten-point left-right scale. There was significant variation by country with a comparison of means by state showing a variation between 6.69 and 4.39. Responses were also more right-wing among more senior management levels in ELECT (5.19) than office and administrative support staff (4.96). In Europe, senior managers (4.33) reported themselves more left-wing than in all other categories (4.59). Nonetheless, the differences are small and the overall picture is of staff identifying centrally along the political spectrum. Variation in political beliefs, of course, does not mean that officials are implementing elections according to their values.

Human resource practices and employee outcomes

Indices were constructed to measure the presence of eight key HRMP and six EOs (only five HRMP were measured using the ELECT survey). Multiple indicators were used for most measures. Tables 3 and 4 in the appendix summarise the questions asked, the mean and the Cronbach's alpha score that was used to test the reliability of the overall measure. These scores were generally over .7 suggesting that they had a good level of internal consistency.

Analysis now only focuses on the data from within Europe in the EMS survey to provide provisional results. Subsequent analysis will merge the EMS data with ELECT data and data being collected at the time of writing. On this basis, it seems that most EMBs do tend use AMO HRMP. Figure 3 below shows that mean scores for each index item are above the central value of 3. Policies to promote ability and motivation are more common than policies to promote opportunity. Performance related pay seems to less common than those to promote teamworking. This is perhaps unsurprising for the public sector. There was significant variation in the use of AMO HRMP at a country level. For instance, in one country the mean scores for AMO are 2.19, 2.98 and 2.68 respectively, compared to another where the means were 4.73, 3.76 and 4.30. There were also significant variations by gender and occupational level. Males experience much better AMO practices than women. They are also likely to have better performance appraisals and receive performance related pay. Those in higher management positions also evaluated their own experiences better.

Figure 4 illustrates the employee outcomes of respondents in the EMS survey. Employees of EMBs seem to be satisfied with their job, have a strong sense of belonging to their organisations and generally do not intend to leave in the immediate future. There is some evidence that the workload can be high and that levels of stress can be considerable, however. Differences were again noted by occupation level. Those in higher managerial positions reported higher workloads, stress, greater civic duty, commitment to the organisation and were less likely to quit.

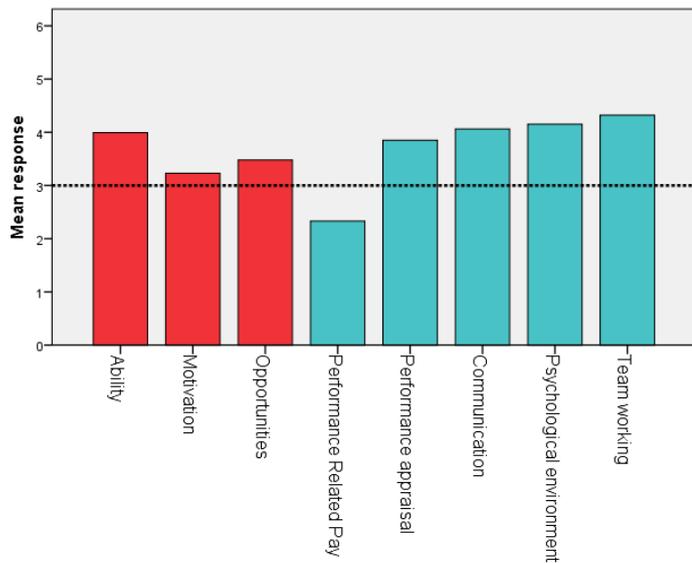


Figure 4 Mean HRMP in the EMS survey

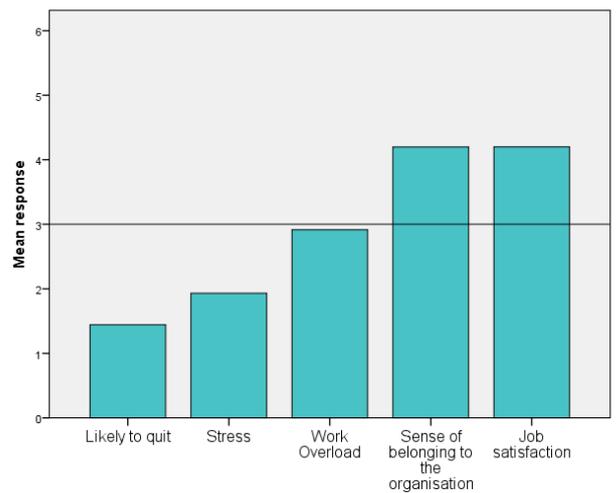


Figure 3: Mean EO in the EMS survey

HRPs, Employee outcomes and measures of electoral integrity

But how do HRMP, EOs and organisational performance effect each other? Analysis begins with Pearson correlation coefficients between each of these indices (Table 1). This provided some initial evidence in support of H1, that AMO procedures improve organisation performance, since was each of these indices were positively association with organisation performance. Results were statistically significant at the .01 level for ability and opportunity and the 0.5 level for motivation. The correlations were relatively low, however, at around .1. Psychological environment and staff appraisal were also found to be significant, but team-working, performance related pay and internal communication seemed to have no effect. There was strong evidence in support of H2 that employee outcomes were closely interlinked. Work overload was very closely linked to stress (.66 correlation), a propensity to quit (.35) and declining job satisfaction (-.24). There was also evidence in support of H3, that employee outcomes affected performance. Electoral management bodies with employees that have higher job satisfaction, lower stress and a lower propensity to quit perform slightly better – but the correlations, although statistically significant were low at the .1 level again.

To further examine the effects of HRMP and EOs six OLS regression models were run with performance as the dependent variable (Table 2). The indices for AMO HRMPs were used as independent variables in the first model and the other HRMP measured were added to this in the second. Again, there is support for H1 because with the ability index has a statistically significant effect. But the only other HRMPs practice to make a difference was team working and this was to reduce performance.

Table 1: Pearson correlations between HRMP, EOs and EMB performance

	Ability	Motiv	Opp	Comm.	Psy. Env.	Team work	Staff app	Per. pay	Work Over.	Civic duty	Job Sat.	Aff Com	Prop. to quit	Stress	Per
Ability	n/a														
Motivation	.450**	n/a													
Opportunities	.486**	.455**	n/a												
Communication	.418**	.380**	.542**	n/a											
Psychological Environment	.419**	.313**	.467**	.555**	n/a										
Team working	.465**	.323**	.638**	.593**	.524**	n/a									
Staff appraisal	.489**	.354**	.562**	.556**	.457**	.578**	n/a								
Performance related pay	.284**	.387**	.349**	.301**	.220**	.325**	.400**	n/a							
Work Overload	.066*	-.049	-.009	-.079*	-.247**	.014	.065*	.109**	n/a						
Civic duty	.139**	.060	.103**	.132**	.029	.145**	.126**	.109**	.093**	n/a					
Job satisfaction	.362**	.380**	.376**	.414**	.480**	.367**	.324**	.218**	-.240**	.075*	n/a				
Affective Commitment	.305**	.237**	.274**	.382**	.486**	.353**	.289**	.133**	-.146**	.149**	.398**	n/a			
Propensity to quit	-.222**	-.254**	-.161**	-.256**	-.411**	-.179**	-.123**	-.053	.345**	.003	-.500**	-.351**	n/a		
Stress	-.098**	-.147**	-.102**	-.204**	-.362**	-.092**	-.046	.018	.660**	.028	-.418**	-.274**	.620**	n/a	
Performance	.188**	.075*	.119**	.048	.128**	-.009	.069*	-.009	.012	-.136**	.108**	.051	-.115**	-.067*	n/a

Controls were added in model three for four variables. Firstly, we might expect performance to be higher in democracies. Greater access to information, transparency, press freedom and more rigorous accountability mechanisms should increase performance (Norris 2017). The 2016 measure for the electoral democracy index was therefore used from V-DEM 7.1 (Coppedge et al. 2017). Secondly, we might expect countries with more resources to be better able to deliver elections (Norris 2015). GDP per capita for 2016 is therefore taken as a measure using data from the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2017). Thirdly, a country being rich does not guarantee that sufficient resources are provided to the EMB, however. It is often argued that electoral officials in even richer established democracies lack resources (Clark 2016; James and Jervier 2017). Data is therefore also taken from V-DEM 7.1 on EMB capacity.¹ Lastly, it is often argued that EMBs with greater institutional autonomy will be better able to run elections (van Ham and Lindberg 2015). Data on EMB autonomy is therefore also taken from V-DEM 7.1.²

¹ The V-DEM question was ‘Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have sufficient staff and resources to administer a well-run national election?’. Answers were on a five-point scale.

² The V-DEM question was ‘Does the Election Management Body (EMB) have autonomy from government to apply election laws and administrative rules impartially in national elections?’. Answers were also on a five-point scale.

When these are included it is noticeable that the effects of HRMP cease to be statistically significant except for teamwork and performance appraisal, which have negative effects. In other words, those EMBs who encourage team work and provide better staff appraisals deliver worse elections. This deserves further investigation. The quality of electoral democracy and capacity instead improve EMB performance. GDP has a negative effect and the autonomy of the EMB has no effect.

The fourth and fifth model investigated the effects of employee outcomes. In the fourth model performance seems to increase with work overload. In other words, working employees harder seems to bring about better performance. Job satisfaction is also found to be statistically significant. These effects both disappear when controls are introduced, however. Oddly, a lower sense civic duty of positively affects performance.

In the sixth model, all variables are included. The two findings are that the opportunity index and the propensity to quit index now become statistically significant. In other words, when all factors are considered, encouraging employees to have a greater say in the work place improves performance, as does having a workforce who are less likely to quit in the future. Teamwork and civic duty have negative effects. These latter findings deserve further attention but if they hold, it suggests that a greater individualist culture within the workplace can help organisational outcomes.

Table 2: OLS regression with PEI EMB Performance as the dependent variable

	AMO		HRMP		All HRMP & Controls		EO		EO & Controls		All HRMP, EO and Controls	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.
HRMP												
Ability	.174**	(.009)	.196***	(0.010)	.016	(.008)					-.006	(.008)
Motivation	-.028	(.009)	-.020	(.009)	-.010	(.007)					-.041	(.007)
Opportunity	.055	(.007)	.143	(.009)	.076	(.007)					.101*	(.007)
Communication			-.022	(.009)	.073	(.007)					.045	(.006)
Psychological environment			.116	(.011)	.074	(.008)					.009	(.009)
Team work			-.206***	(.009)	-.191***	(.007)					-.183***	(.007)
Appraisals			.010	(.007)	-.099*	(.006)					-.077	(.006)
Performance related pay			-.053	(.006)	-.046	(.005)					-.037	(.005)
Employee Outcomes												
Work overload							.119*	(.009)	-.012	(.006)	.025	(.007)
Civic Duty							-.161***	(.005)	-.077	(.004)	-.068*	(.004)
Job satisfaction							.079**	(.010)	-.024	(.007)	.017	(.008)
Affective commitment							.022	(.008)	.034	(.004)	.008	(.006)
Propensity to quit							-.073	(.007)	-.094	(.005)	-.089*	(.006)
Stress							-.059	(.010)	-.0707	(.007)	-.084	(.006)
Controls												
VDem					.761***	(.197)			.774	(.190)	.828***	(.194)
Polyarchy												
GDP per capita					-.503***	(.000)			-.514	(.000)	-.539***	(.000)
EMB Autonomy					0.13	(.027)			.011	(.026)	-.007	(.026)
EMB Capacity					.413***	(.034)			.402	(.032)	.411***	(.033)
Constant	4.148***		4.144***				4.288***					
R ²	.038		.068		.485		.047		.495		.526	

*** Significant at the 0.001 level ** Significant at 0.01 level * Significant at the 0.05 level

Given that some of the findings here were surprising, a structural equation model (SEM) was run to identify the relationships between HRMP, EOs and performance. SEM is a multivariate statistical

analysis that uses a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis to identify underlying relationships. It is primarily used to confirm expected theoretical relationships (Hox and Bechger 2007). Analysis was undertaken using AMOS 24.0 using maximum likelihood estimation to fit models to the data. The results are illustrated in figure 5 below. The standardised regression weights are shown for each pathway.

Overall, the model limited evidence in support of H1 and H3 – that AMO HRMPs and EO would increase performance. The estimated relationship between the ability index and performance was statistically significant at the .001 level. None of the other variables were shown to be, however, and the overall ability of the data to explain performance was very low.

There was very strong evidence in support of H2, however. This forecast that many EOs are related. The covariance estimates between all EOs were found to all be statistically significant at the .001 level. Work overload, stress, job satisfaction and the likelihood of an employee quitting their job running elections all fit closely together.



Figure 5: Structural Equation Model linking HRMP, EO and performance

Conclusions

The management and implementation of elections is a pressing international policy issue which is increasingly being explored by scholars from comparative politics, law and public administration. This paper has provided new information on who delivers elections around the world by reporting findings from the first ever cross-national surveys of electoral officials. Although there are some large, permanent and centralised organisations that deliver elections, it is more common for there to be smaller national organisations with workforces being buttressed from other departments at election time, or staff being based in sub-national government. A notable finding was that there are significant gender biases, as there are in many other professions.

The paper has sought to shed light on the topic using the literature on human resource management. Specifically, it has explored whether the use of AMO 'best practice' methods for managing staff would

positively affect the performance of the electoral management boards. Using Pearson correlations, OLS regression and structural equation modelling, an initial assessment of part of the data is that some small statistically significant associations were found. Those which seemed to stand out most meritocratic recruitment and training. Team working was found to reduce performance, giving evidence that an individualistic work climate may improve organisational performance.

The study has initially found very strong evidence that many critical employee outcomes are strongly related. Work overload, stress, job satisfaction and propensity to quit all interact with one another. This is especially important because some evidence was derived that these can affect electoral management performance. The propensity of employees to quit was found to be important in the final OLS.

Although the effects initially identified were small, one reason for this might be the large number of variables that were captured to measure HRMP and EO. Subsequent analysis should therefore establish whether combining variables produces different results. This analysis will also include further data which is coming in as the author writes and the ELECT dataset.

Appendix

Concept	EMS			ELECT		
	Measures	Mean (0-6)	Reliability	Measures	Mean (0-4)	Reliability
Ability (5)	5 Measures I am provided with sufficient opportunities for training and development Skill and merits decide who gets the job Personal contacts and networks decide who gets the job (REVERSED) The political contacts and party affiliations decide who gets the job (REVERSED) A rigorous selection process is used to select new recruits	4.00	.758	5 Measures 'Job satisfaction: Training Opportunities' 'Would like more opportunities for training/career development' (Reversed) 'How often skills and merit decide appointment of officials' 'How often determines who is promoted: skills and merit' 'How often determines who is promoted: personal contacts networks (REVERSED)' 'How often determines who is promoted: political contacts, party affiliation (REVERSED)	2.00	.707
Motivation (3)	I feel my job is secure I have the opportunities if I want to be promoted I am rewarded fairly for the amount of effort that I put in	3.22	.644	'Job satisfaction: Career promotion opportunities' 'Job satisfaction: Pay And conditions'	2.48	.785
Opportunities (2)	Employee input is obtained prior to making decisions Employees' concerns with decisions are listened to	3.48	.918	Job opinion: would like more input into Decisions in organization (REVERSED)	0.80	n/a
Communication (1)	This department keeps me well informed	4.06	n/a	Job opinion: well informed about the tasks needed in job	3.37	n/a
Psychological climate (4)	Our line manager/supervisor considers the personal welfare of our group When I am on a difficult assignment, I can usually count on getting assistance from my line manager/supervisor My work mates/colleagues resist change (REVERSED) The morale in this department is very low (REVERSED)	4.15	.651	Job opinion: Can usually rely on assistance/guidance from supervisor Job satisfaction: Guidance from supervisors	2.40	.303
Team working (1)	Team working is strongly encouraged in our department	4.32	n/a	Not measured		
Performance appraisal (1)	Staff are given meaningful feedback regarding their individual performance, at least once a year	3.84	n/a	Not measured		
Discretionary pay (1)	In this department those who perform well in their jobs get better rewards than those who just meet the basic job requirements	2.30	n/a	Not measured		

Table 3: Human Resource Practice Indexes constructed from the EMS AND ELECT survey

Concept	Measures	Mean (0-6)	Reliability	Measures	Mean (0-4)	Reliability
Work Overload (4)	I am pressured to work long hours I have to work very intensively I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do Different people at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	2.93	.796	Job opinion: have to neglect some tasks because too much to do	1.69	n/a

Civic duty (1)	I consider public service my civic duty	3.44	n/a	Job opinion: consider public service my civic duty	3.20	n/a
Job satisfaction (1)	All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job as a whole these days?	4.21	n/a	Job satisfaction: Overall	2.76	n/a
Affective commitment (2)	I feel like 'part of the family' at my department I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my department' (REVERSED)	4.18	.528	Job opinion: Do not feel strong sense of belonging to department (REVERSED)	3.19	n/a
Intention to quit (1)	I often think of quitting this job	1.45	n/a	Job opinion: often think of quitting this job	0.83	n/a
Stress (3)	My workload negatively affects the quality of my life (e.g. family or social activities) Some days I feel I cannot continue in this job due to work pressures In my job, I am often confronted with problems I cannot do much about	1.94	.802	Job opinion: feel that my job is too demanding/stressful	2.19	n/a

Table 4: Employee Outcome Indexes constructed from the EMS and ELECT survey

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