Exploring Human Resource Development in Open, Distance and Digital Education (ODDE): An interpretative Phenomenological Analysis at ODDE University

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses two research questions: (i) What does human resource development mean to employees at open, distance and digital education (ODDE) University? (ii) What is it like for employees to experience human resource development at ODDE University? It applies the phenomenological analysis. The researchers selected four participants (n=4) from the Faculty of Education (FE) and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity (FSSH) as purposive sampling, and the data collection is through in-depth interviews based on their own experiences. The research applied the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. The IPA employed three stages, namely stage 1 (description), stage 2 (interpretation), and stage 3 (emergent themes – superordinate themes and subordinate themes). The findings revealed that their understanding of human resource development is a continuous improvement that improves human capital continuously through human resource activities and empowerment in which employees have the freedom and trust to carry out their duties and tasks. The participants feel appreciated, for ODDE University is concerned about its employees' well-being and human resource development practices. These considerations lead to the most vital aspect for ODDE University to sustain itself as an ODDE leader when these employees are motivated and satisfied in continuously contributing their expertise in education. The most significant part of the study is learning from human resource development at ODDE University to sustain itself as the leader in ODDE in Malaysia.

Keywords: open, distance and digital education (ODDE), human resource development (HRD), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), human capital

INTRODUCTION

An organisation's most valuable resource is its human capital, which guarantees the accomplishment of its goals and objectives. Human resource development (HRD) is the secret to increase and improve productivity since it aids in the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes that employers seek in their workforce. Employee job satisfaction may rise, and team members' communication ability may improve. In the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, developing human resources has an impact on university performance, and it makes universities perform better because it places the right people in the appropriate positions, which boosts morale, creates business opportunities, and increases labour turnover rates (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2006).

HRD is one of the crucial determinants in ensuring the sustainability of higher learning institutions' open distance and digital education (ODDE) landscape. Established in 2000, the particular ODDE University is the seventh private university in Malaysia, a consortium of eleven Malaysian public universities. The ODDE University has been voted recently as the Employers' Preferred University with a 5-star rating through a Talentbank Group survey on the employability of Malaysian graduates. This award reflects attitudes, skills and knowledge in human resource development at the ODDE University. Human resources play an essential role in the development strategy of the university in general and the goal of internationalization in particular. The ODDE University caters to local students in Malaysia and provides ODDE to students in some parts of the

world, such as Ewastini, Ghana, Dominica, Maldives and Sri Lanka. When talking about internationalization, some memorandums of agreements have been signed recently with a few institutions abroad.

In this study, two research questions were addressed: (i) what does human resource development mean to employees at ODDE University? (ii) what is it like for employees to experience human resource development at ODDE University?

LITERATURE REVIEW

HRD and Its Fundamental Theories

Human resource development (HRD) is the systematic process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development to improve performance (Swanson, 2001). According to Knowles et al. (2014), HRD focuses on improving the expertise and performance of individuals, work groups, work processes, and the entire organization. McLagan and Suhadolnik (1989) define HRD as integrating related practices such as training and development, career development, and organizational development to improve individual and group knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance organizational outcomes.

In explaining the process of HRD, Swanson and Holton III (2011) propose three core beliefs that underlie HRD theory. First, human expertise is developed and maximized through HRD processes for the mutual long- and short-term benefits of the sponsoring organization and the individuals involved. Second, HRD professionals advocate individual/group, work processes, and organizational integrity. Third, organizations are viewed as systems, and HRD is pursued as an improvement process within the host organization.

Figure 1 further illustrates a five-phase process model for HRD that collaborates with other fundamental organizational processes. The process includes inputs, work processes, and outputs of the organizational system, as well as its mission, strategy, structure, technology, and human resources. The larger environment is also identified, including economic, political, and cultural forces. The model highlights the importance of considering the context and interrelatedness of all components of HRD within the larger organisational and environmental contexts.
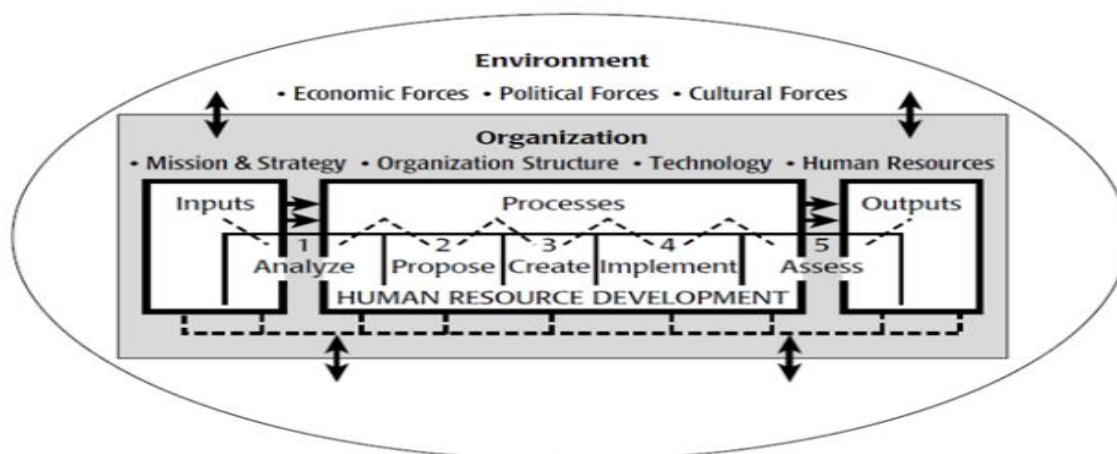

Figure 1 Model of HRD within the organization and environment (Swanson, 2001).

The HRD theories include three core domains: psychological, economic, and system theories (Swanson & Holton III, 2011) (Figure 2). The psychological theory acknowledges human beings as brokers of productivity and renewal along with the cultural and behavioural nuances. Economic theory is recognized as a primary driver and survival metric of organizations. System theory recognizes purpose, pieces, and relationships that can maximize or strangle systems and subsystems. The three theories are unique, complementary, and robust, making up the core theory underlying the discipline of HRD. Integrating these three theories into an ethical framework is critical to securing HRD as a discipline and model of practice.
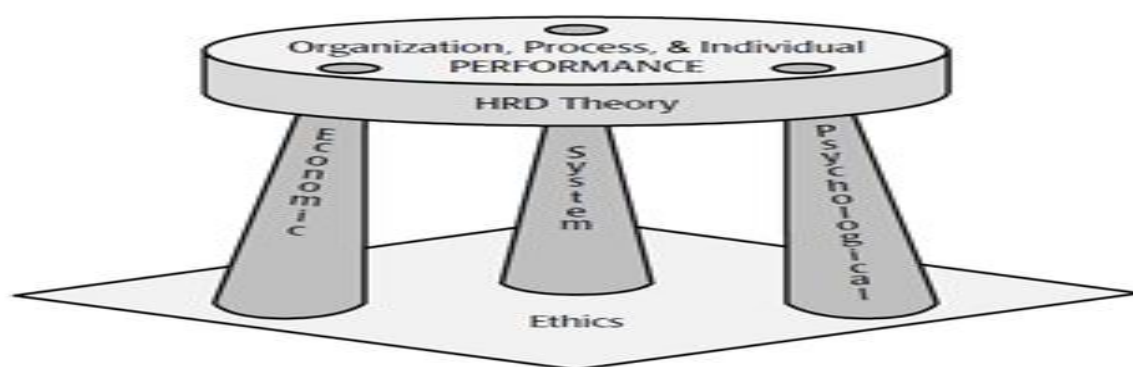
Figure 2. The theoretical foundations of HRD

(Swanson, 2001).

HRD and University Performance

Human resource development (HRD) allows universities to operate to their maximum potential. In particular, efficient HRD ensures that universities are flexible since their workforce is capable, adaptable, and has the right skills at the right time (Mittal, 2013). The secret to permitting workforce improvements is to comprehend the impact of HRD on systemic practices, utility, and university productivity.

Research has demonstrated the significant impact of HRD practices on employee performance and provides organizations with a competitive advantage (Amin et al., 2014; Kaifeng et al., 2012; Kareem & Hussien, 2019; Tien et al., 2020). For instance, Amin et al. (2014) identified that recruitment, training, performance appraisal, career planning, employee participation, job definition, and compensation significantly affect university performance. Kareem and Hussein (2019) ensure that HRD practices are significantly related to employee performance in enhancing university organisational effectiveness. Three factors that affect employee performance and improve organisational effectiveness were identified. First, training and development enhance organisational effectiveness by providing employees with appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities. Employees participating in training and development programs apply new knowledge, skills, and abilities in their work, leading to a better attitude and competencies in performing their jobs (Tien & Grzeszczyk, 2019). Second, career development is a continuous process of work-life that enables organizations to develop and place employees in positions compatible with their employees' interests, needs, and goals. This promotes employee satisfaction and optimal use of employee potential (Kakui & Gachunga, 2016). Third, organisational development strives to improve the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. Specifically, organisational development is a system-wide process and planned effort managed from the top to increase organisational effectiveness through planned interventions and training experiences (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

However, focusing solely on the aspects mentioned above is insufficient. Tien et al. (2020) presented Ton Duc Thang University's human resource development strategy as a model for other universities in Vietnam. The researchers suggested that HRD should be transformed into a dynamic state of human capital, which means improving people's social dynamism through policies and institutions and fully unleashing their potential. People with unlimited potential will be exploited and become a tremendous source of social and organisational capital if they are free to develop, be creative, devote themselves and are paid the appropriate value of labour. Continuously improving the quality of teaching staff is essential for ensuring the university's sustainable growth.

In addition to the above, a good HRD environment is necessary for dedication to university achievement (Kaifeng et al., 2012). Through various human resources development efforts, many forward-thinking colleges work to foster a welcoming environment that will help them attract and keep good personnel. HRD methods give employees the freedom and opportunity to participate in decision-making. The success of HRD implementation has been evaluated based on specific HRD evaluation models to obtain the necessary data on

HRD, such as employee productivity, efficiency, and overall happiness, and to shape development programs to produce favourable university results.

HRD in Open Distance Digital Education (ODDE)

Many studies confirmed the significant impacts of HRD practices in leveraging high-performing organizations. However, empirical studies on HRD in open, distance and digital education (ODDE) are lacking. Due to the shifting and rapidly changing environment and global challenges, ODDE universities need to implement HRD strategies to enhance the competencies of their employees to address environmental turbulences. Researchers demonstrated HRD practices in various aspects at ODL universities. For instance, Panda et al. (2006) explored the importance of effective HRD at Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). The researchers argue that given the unique challenges posed by distance education, such as the need for specialized technical skills and the importance of communication and collaboration among geographically dispersed teams, HRD is essential for addressing these challenges and ensuring the success of ODDE programmes.

In addition, Owusu-Mensah et al. (2015) investigated HRD practices in the Distance Education program at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, where the researchers found that inadequate training of open distance learning (ODL) staff and educators may contribute to high dropout rates among distance learners. ODL institutions require unique abilities from educators and students to work and learn effectively in a virtual learning environment. These abilities may differ significantly from those required in traditional face-to-face education. Therefore, it is essential to provide ODL staff and educators with adequate training in the unique characteristics of ODL, including the effective use of technology, online pedagogy, and student support strategies. This training should be an ongoing process to ensure that educators and staff are up-to-date with the latest developments in ODL.

Nguyen (2018) looked into the functions of HRD at Hanoi Open University (HOU) to advance HRD to raise the quality and efficiency of training at HOU. He argues that HRD practices in the open university play a key role in improving the quality of academic staff, facilitating innovation, and enhancing organisational outcomes. The study's findings indicate that HOU's HRD practices in human resource management, structure, and quality could be performing better. The challenges include a lack of full-time and highly qualified workers, inadequate and unbalanced job descriptions, and disjointed, ad hoc personnel management.

In contrast, Tien et al. (2020) focus on the HRD strategy of Ton Duc Thang University in Vietnam, which aims to improve its position in international rankings. The researchers argue that HRD is essential for universities to adapt to the rapidly changing higher education landscape and improve global competitiveness. The HRD strategy adopted by Ton Duc Thang University includes talent attraction and retention, leadership development, and staff development programs.

In conclusion, while the importance of HRD in higher education institutions is widely acknowledged, there is a significant research gap in HRD studies conducted at ODL universities. The use of interpretative phenomenological analysis in this study on the lived experience of HRD at ODDE University provides a relevant contribution towards filling this gap.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. IPA is committed to systematically exploring personal experience (Tomkins, 2017). Four participants were selected for this study to obtain their lived experience in human resource development. Two were from the Faculty of Education (FE), while the other two were from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity (FSSH) at ODDE University. All the participants are females who hold doctorate qualifications. They are between 37 and 71 years old, and the age means recorded at 55 years old.

They have been working at ODDE University for between one year and 11 years, and the mean for the years of service stands at 6.8 years. They are identified as key informants 1, 2, 3 and 4. Table 1 summarises the participants' profiles.

Table 1Summary of the Participants' Profiles

Participants	Agee	Years of Service	Faculty (*)	Qualification
Key Informant 1	65	11	FE	Doctorate
Key Informant 2	37	1	FSSH	Doctorate
Key Informant 3	48	8	FE	Doctorate
Key Informant 1	71	7	FSSH	Doctorate

In terms of analytical steps in IPA, three stages were employed, namely (i) stage 1 (description), (ii) stage 2 (interpretation) and (iii) stage 3 (emergent themes – superordinate themes and subordinate themes). The details of these stages are available in the data analysis section.

(*): FE (Faculty of Education), FSSH (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity)

RESULTS

There are three stages in this data analysis. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 (in section 4.1) are the responses to the first research question (RQ), i.e. 'What is your understanding of human resource development?'. In contrast, tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 (in section 4.2) are the responses to the second RQ, i.e. What is it like for employees to experience human resource development at ODDE University? The feedback is from each of the participants' thoughts and experiences. The researchers employed stage 1 (description) and stage 2 (interpretation) in each of the responses from the key informants 1, 2, 3 and 4 for both research questions.

Figure 1 is a diagram of the emergent theme comprising the superordinate and the subordinate themes. There are two emergent themes: human resource practices and positive synergy. Under human resource practices, there are two subordinate themes, i.e. continuous improvement and empowerment. There are also two subordinate themes under positive synergy, i.e. employees' well-being and motivation/satisfaction.
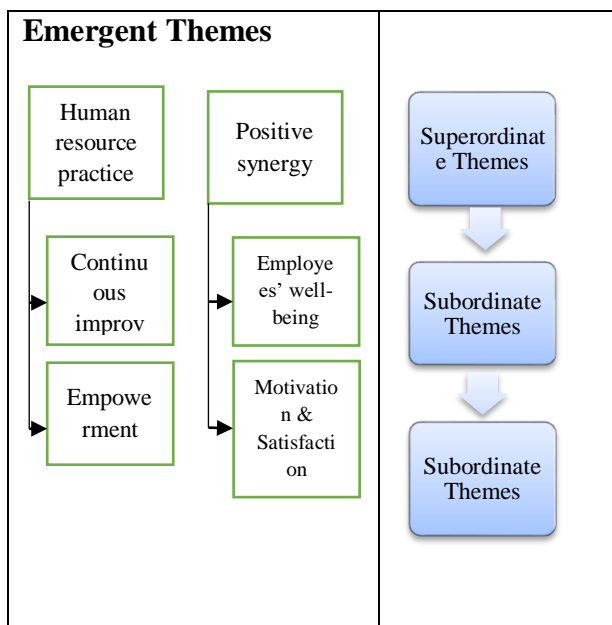

Figure 3Responses for RQ 1 from Key Informant 1 Emergent Themes (Superordinate and Subordinate Themes)

Stage 1 and 2: Responses for RQ 1

Below are stages 1 and 2 related to responses for RQ1 from key informants 1, 2, 3, and 4, as shown in tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
Improve human capital Continuous improvement (staff knowledge, training, skill, attitude) Human resources activities (spirit of kaizen)	I suppose my understanding of human resource development is to improve the human capital in any organization, like providing continuous improvement for their staff knowledge, training, skills, and attitude. I also found that these human resource activities would be enriching if they were to organize training in the spirit of kaizens.	Key informant 1 emphasised that human resource development continuously improves human capital through human resource activities in the spirit of kaizen (a Japanese word that means continuous improvement). It is motivating and rejuvenating, as it should not be stagnant.
Networking: can't stand alone, consolidate Motivating	I have been throughout my training at ODDE University, and they always conduct training for every department because we work in networking from one department to another. They ensure we know what they are doing and how to get help because they are our network. They can't stand alone. Because we are a private entity, there are many departments, and the purpose of the department is to consolidate the services rendered, so it is essential for human resources to acknowledge that. Not only that, but it is motivating and rejuvenating. Whatever we are doing is not stagnant. To make sure we are fit. When you are hired, job fit must be there.	

Table 3 Responses for RQ 1 from Key Informant 2

Stage (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
Achieving organisational goals Personal skills, competencies, and	From what I understand, human resource development aims to assist employees in achieving organizational goals by fostering the growth of their organizational and personal skills, competencies, and knowledge. It also aims to	Key informant 2 argued that human resource development assists employees in achieving organisational goals by fostering personal skills, competencies and knowledge.

knowledge Empower employees – career development, performance management and employee training	empower employees by giving them access to various options, including career development, performance management, and employee training.	Besides, it also empowers employees through career development, performance management, and training.

Table 4 Responses for RQ 1 from Key Informant 3

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
Career development Employees' well-being, appropriate salary, promotion exercises, training medical benefits	My understanding is that human resource development for employees must include career development. Human resource development should also care for employees' well-being and pay appropriate salaries according to their qualifications, promotion exercises, training, medical, etc. In addition, HRD allows us to learn to increase our knowledge. So, HR has to develop all of that to be the best. Empowerment is important.	Key informant 3 defined human resource development as developing human capital resources through employees' well-being, appropriate pay, medical benefits, training, etc.

Table 5 Responses for RQ 1 from Key Informant 4

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
▪ Developing skills, knowledge, abilities ▪ Leave matters, perks and benefits ▪ Guideline	When I was in a public university, there were no human resources. It was called the registration office, which consists of many things such as departments, leave matters, perks and benefits, allowances, etc. I suppose it's all human resource development. And then I think because that public university is big, I did not know anyone Whenever we had a new issue, we just went to that department. Here, it is small, and we know everyone. Human resources development refers to the guidelines the organization uses to efficiently develop employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities. Besides, empowerment is given to the employees to perform better.	Key informant 4 described human resources development as developing skills, knowledge and abilities.

Stage 1 and 2: Responses for RQ 2

Below are stages 1 and 2 related to responses for RQ 2 from the key informants 1, 2, 3, and 4 as shown in tables 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Table 6 Responses for RQ 2 from Key Informant 1

Stage 1 Description	Responses	Stage 2 Interpretation
Well-being Motivated	As far as Kelana Jaya is concerned, I can quickly get help. They are very friendly, and it is a warm environment in terms of our relationship with the staff, regardless of their level (of position). That is also the environment and climate, as you mentioned just now. I think it's a ripple effect from whatever is transpired from HR. Walk the talk. I think they also walk the talk. I know they are role models, yeah. They are friendly. I think the staff are well trained, you know. From the security level up to the top, I can see their ethos is almost the same. I think HR has moulded ODDE University staff very well. That is what I can feel. I did not encounter unpleasantness so much, and I am motivated to work well. If there is unpleasant stuff, it can be overcome quickly. I think that is the environment or climate. There are a lot of activities and training by HR before this. I do not know at the moment. I am not involved; I am not required to do that; I am supposed to.	Key informant 1 highlighted that ODDE University is concerned about the employees' well-being. Besides, she is happy working and motivated.

Table 7 Responses for RQ 2 from Key Informant 2

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
The performance appraisal method Reward Support Freedom Employees' well-being Tangible benefits	Human resource development is vital. Without it, the organisation's efficiency might deteriorate. Human resource development will assist the organization in identifying areas that need improvement and providing the essential steps to enhance the employees' skills and knowledge, thereby improving their performance, growth, and overall competence. I know that ODDE University's performance appraisal method is entirely objective. It allows the company to identify the employees who have contributed most to its growth, evaluate their work thus far, and eventually reward those who have proven themselves to be particularly valuable.	Key informant 2 made a comparison between her previous workplace and ODDE. Her experience at ODDE University is better regarding the performance appraisal method, rewards, support system, freedom (work autonomy), employees' well-being and tangible benefits. Key informant 2 is happy working at ODDE, although she has been there for about 11 months. She is motivated and committed when ODDE is concerned about employees' well-being. She feels appreciated.

	So far, I can say that ODDE HRD has effectively supported staff members in sharpening their abilities and developing competencies. In addition to having a clear job description, I have the freedom and trust to carry out my duties at work.	
	I am capable, satisfied, and committed to working at ODDE. So far, I am pleased with the working environment here compared to my prior employer. There are significantly better opportunities here.	
	I frequently compared my current work experiences with those of my former organisation. I am confident that ODDE is responsible for the employee's well-being. This is one of the things that motivates me to work. Aside from that, the tangible benefits provided by ODDE University are better than those provided by my previous organisation. This is significant and motivates me to continue working with ODDE University.	

Table 8 Responses for RQ 2 from Key Informant 3

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
Good pay	About the salary at ODDE University, it can be said to be good so far. Those who have been in service for a year have increments and bonuses. HR has never broken its promises.	Key informant 3 made a comparison between her previous workplace and ODDE University. She highlighted that ODDE University is better than her previous work in many aspects. Among others are good pay, medical benefits, and friendliness.
Best medical benefits	ODDE is one of the best medical benefits compared to my old workplaces.	ODDE University provides better benefits compared to previous workplaces, enhancing employee satisfaction.
Friendliness, respect, easy getting help	I believe that friendliness among employees, respect, and ease of getting help if needed are some values at ODDE. HR will inform us of any policies and display the information for us to access it easily.	Positive workplace culture at ODDE University promotes cooperation, respect, and access to information.
Motivation – work as worship (an Islamic perspective), salary	I asked for a job because of worship. The second motivation is salary. I want to increase the stocks of the afterlife. Writing articles contributes to this goal.	The informant views work as part of religious devotion. Teaching and article writing are seen as contributions to spiritual reward, enhancing motivation.

Teaching as a strength	I use teaching as my strength.	The informant values teaching and sees it as a personal strength and meaningful endeavour, further linked to religious values.
Opportunity to work after 60 years old	I love the policy of ODDE University that it does not have mandatory retirement. I will continue working as long as I am healthy. Compared to other universities, ODDE is the only one that offers this. It motivates me to stay because my children are grown and I want to add more stock to my afterlife.	The opportunity to work post-retirement at ODDE University is highly motivating and valued. It supports continuous engagement and spiritual fulfilment.
HRD as support and leader	HRD functions as a resource for its employees and as a leader who should develop a plan and vision for them.	HRD is seen as playing a dual role: support and strategic leadership.
KPI concerns	KPI is very subjective. KPI should be appropriate and not burden the lecturers. KPI has to be our guide for promotion, career building, salary increase, etc.	The informant expresses concern that KPIs should be fair, realistic, and aligned with personal and professional growth rather than being burdensome.

Table 9 Responses for RQ 2 from Key Informant 4

Stage 1 (Description)	Responses	Stage 2 (Interpretation)
Connect with ODDE's revenue Feel better about the performance system Commitment to working Good pay, promotion and bonuses Boost motivation Still work at the age of 70	At first, I don't understand because it differs from public universities. What we do in government, we also do in ODDE University. But, at ODDE University, we must connect with ODDE University's revenue. After some time, I can understand it because when I was attached to a public university, I never thought about university revenue. If I have had to teach four courses, that's all four. It means that how much the income goes into the company has nothing to do with me. It means that if you do a lot of work in terms of KPI, it's high, and that's good. But, from a transparent point of view, it's also a problem. In the former workplace, it was based on research because the university wanted to raise its name. Sometimes, in terms of teaching, it is not to say that I didn't teach, but some lecturers may be because we had many lecturers. We shared some courses, one course for two people, for example. In private universities, it cannot be like that. However, I feel this means that public universities do not care about the quality of what they teach students from a teaching point of view. Indirectly, you will see that you emphasize the name of the university. We do follow the syllabus to see if the teaching has an impact, but we are unsure.	Key informant 4 compared ODDE University and her previous work (a public university). She mentioned that connecting the organization and revenue is crucial to ensure the university's sustainability. She feels better about the performance system, good pay, promotions, and bonuses, which boost employee motivation.

	I feel better about the performance system at ODDE University, but I think this also depends on the individual. It is my commitment because working here is my choice. I can work, so I want to work. With regards to a workload perspective, for example. It's a lot of work, but I'll get through it. In the old place, there were many flexible hours. For example, when I newly joined ODDE University, I observed no one at the canteen at 8 am. It means everyone went to work at the stipulated time. If at the old workplace, at 9-10 in the morning, it's still full of people. I don't know if it is people working or sitting drinking or not monitored. That's not right. Because this doesn't have a particular action and at 10 o'clock there are people in the canteen, too.	
	We used to meet the president, who would give a motivational talk, encouraging indirectly. Then there is a support system, which is also good.	
	In terms of salary, promotion and benefits are very good. That thing gives a lot of benefits to employees, such as bonuses. Since I came first, there has been a bonus at ODDE University. While working in a public university, I did not have such benefits in the past. This kind of benefit certainly gives a motivational boost to work.	
	I think I am competent and satisfied, so I feel motivated. I feel that I want to work. Most of my friends at this age (early 70s) are not working, but I never tell them about my working environment.	

Stage 3: Emergent Themes (Superordinate and Subordinate Themes)

Stage 3 is the emergent themes, which are superordinate and subordinate. The emergent themes are derived from stages 1 and 2. The details of the themes are shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Stage 3: Emergent Themes and Sample of References

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Sample of References	
Human Resources Development Practices	Continuous Improvement	Key Informant 1: Key Informant 2: Key Informant 3: Key Informant 4:	"…providing continuous improvement for their staff knowledge, training, skill, and attitude." "...to assist employees in achieving organisational goals by fostering the growth of their organisational and personal skills, competencies, and knowledge." "… human resource development for employees must include career development." "…it is the guidelines the

			organization uses to develop employees' skills, knowledge and abilities efficiently."
	Empowerment	Key Informant 1: Key Informant 2: Key Informant 3: Key Informant 4:	"…we sort of have some idea of what they are doing and how to get help because they are our network." "...is to empower employees by giving them access to a range of options, including career development, performance management, and employee training, I also have the freedom and trust to carry out my duties at work." "…empowerment is important." "…empowerment is given to the employees to perform better."
Positive Synergy	Employees' Well-Being	Key Informant 1: Key Informant 2: Key Informant 3: Key Informant 4:	"…. I think it's a ripple effect from whatever is transpired from HR. Walk the talk. I think they also walk the talk. I know they are role models." "...I frequently compared my current work experiences with those of my former organization. I am confident that ODDE is concerned and accountable for the employee's well-being." "…Those who have been in service for a year have increments and bonuses. HR has never broken its promises. ODDE is one of the best medical benefits compared to my old workplaces." "…In terms of salary, promotion and benefits are very good. That thing gives a lot of benefits to employees such as bonuses."
	Motivation and Satisfaction	Key Informant 1: Key Informant 2: Key Informant 3: Key Informant 4:	"…I did not encounter unpleasantness so much and I am motivated to work well." "…Aside from that, the tangible benefits provided by ODDE are clearly better than those provided by my previous organization. This is significant and motivates me to continue working with ODDE." "…I want to say that the first

			motivation is that I asked for a job because of worship. The second motivation, of course, is salary. It is the only way I want to increase the stocks of the afterlife."
			"…I think I am competent and satisfied, so I feel motivated. I feel that I want to work."

DISCUSSION

This study employed the IPA analysis that addressed two research objectives, (i) to identify their understanding of human resource development and (ii) to examine their lived experience of human resource development at ODDE University.

All the key informants responded that their understanding of human resource development is two-fold. Firstly, it is about continuous improvement that improves human capital continuously through human resource activities. The human resource activities are not limited to training, which assists employees in achieving organisational goals through fostering personal skills, competencies and knowledge. Secondly, it is about empowering employees, which gives them the freedom and trust to carry out their duties and tasks.

Concerning their lived experiences of human resource development at ODDE University, it looks like positive feedback. Compared with their previous employment, they feel appreciated, especially when ODDE is concerned about its employees' well-being, such as salary, promotion exercise, and bonuses. Besides, human resource development practices are well implemented. All these considerations lead to the most vital aspect for ODDE to sustain itself as an ODL leader: when these employees are motivated and satisfied in continuously contributing their expertise in education. Academic staff members are in charge of teaching, learning, and research at universities, giving them a lot of attention (Pausits, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the sustainability of ODL University starts with motivated and satisfied employees. This study is significant for ODDE universities to learn from human resource development at this particular ODDE University to sustain itself as the leader in ODDE in Malaysia.

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