

The Effects of High-Performance Work Practices on Turnover Intention with Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Breach: A Case of IT Firms in Oman.

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Abstract. The study aimed to test the HPWS and its employee outcomes in the IT sector in Oman with mediating role of Psychological Contract Breach (PCB). The study utilized a quantitative approach along with a cross-sectional survey method for data collection. Data is collected from the staff of selected IT firms (n=124). AMOS is used for analysis which consisted of two stages. In the first stage, the reliability and validity of the construct are tested; while, in the second stage, regression analysis is used for hypotheses testing. The study result shows that recruitment & selection, training & development, job security, and communication exerted negative and significant influence on staff turnover intentions; while, the result for promotion and autonomy turned out to be insignificant and negative insignificant. Furthermore, recruitment and selection, job security, and autonomy had negative and significant effects on employees' perceived psychological contract breach (PCB), whereas training and development, promotion, and communication had small effects. PCB partly mediates between HPWS dimensions and staff turnover intentions, according to mediation studies based on indirect impact analysis. Based on these findings, we concluded that HPWS is critical for IT companies to generate positive employee outcomes.

Key words: Human Resource, HPWS, Psychological Contract, Turnover Intentions, IT, Oman.

1 Introduction

In the present study, the effects of a High-performance work system (HPWS) on staff turnover intentions are investigated among the staff of IT firms in the Sultanate of Oman. Accordingly, HPWS refers to the adoption of such interlinked practices which are strategic along with HR function assuming a business partner role. The HPWS is a bundle of HR practices which are also known as a High-performance work system [Ngo-Henha \(2018\)](#); [O'Reilly III et al. \(1991\)](#), and High-Performance HR practices ([Goyal and Patwardhan, 2020](#)). Common HPWS dimensions include recruitment and selection, training and development, autonomy, communication, job security, and performance-related pay ([McClellan and Collins, 2019](#)). Previous studies show that HPWS leads to positive employee behavioral and attitudinal outcomes ([Appelbaum et al.,](#)

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2000; Chen et al., 2018). In the present study, we investigated HPWS and its employee behavioral outcome in a new context of IT sector firms in Oman.

The main problem faced by the IT firms in Oman is that they face talent shortages resulting in problems such as turnover issues among the staff. Furthermore, IT firms lack international competitiveness which can be improved by giving attention to their HR issues (Ocen et al., 2017). Thus, the two big challenges for the IT firms in Oman are talent shortage and the high turnover among the IT staff. Keeping in view this background, the study focuses on HPWS to propose it as a viable solution (Payne et al., 2015). Thus, the central tenant of this paper is that if IT firms adopt suitable HPWS, it can improve their staff retention which can give IT firms a competitive advantage over competitors and increase international competitiveness as well. So, following are the objectives of this study. First, to assess the impact of HPWS on employee turnover intention. Second, to assess the impact of HPWS on employee PCB. Third, to test if PCB mediates the employee turnover intention relationship.

The theoretical significance of the present study is that it makes two important contributions to the literature. The first contribution is the contextual gap as various studies investigated the influence of HPWS on employees; however, there is a scarcity of such studies in the Omani context. Furthermore, the Omani-based HR and outcome studies mostly focused on the Oil and Gas sector while little known relevant studies are related to the IT sector. Thus, the study aims to fill this contextual gap by testing the influence of HPWS and psychological contract on employees behavior in a new context i.e. IT sector in Oman which can be beneficial for IT firms. Second, the study adopts a joint process approach by testing the PCB as a mediator thus enhancing our understanding of how HPWS leads to employee behavioral outcomes. The integration of the psychological contract breach in the HPWS-turnover intention relationship is significant since it can shed light on the underlying mechanism of how HPWS influences employee behavior. The practical contribution is that the management of the IT firms can use the findings to adjust its HR practices and subsequently utilize staff strategically.

2 Literature Review

2.1 HPWS

HPWS is a group of HR practices that are interrelated and designed to improve the skills and efforts of staff (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020; Robinson and Wolfe Morrison, 2000). The HPWS is an evolved form of HRM and consistent with the soft version of HRM which is about the treatment of employees with respect, and focus on their wellbeing, and adopting a developmental approach (Rousseau, 2011). This approach is different from the traditional hard version of HRM which focuses on close monitoring of staff accompanied with detailed rules and regulations and treatment of staff dispassionately (Rousseau et al., 2018). The study uses the six-dimensional model of HPWS and details are as follows:

2.1.1 Recruitment & Selection

Recruitment and selection are about enabling an organization to hire such staff who are fit with the organization and the nature of the job and have suitable attitudes and behavior consistent with the organizational goals (Said et al., 2021). It is a process of advertising, attracting, and screening suitable candidates for the job and ensuring that such individual is selected who possess suitable work-related knowledge, skills, and abilities (Goldstein et al., 2017; Milanović et al.,

2018). Thus the goal is to ensure organizational human resource needs are efficiently fulfilled at both short and long-term duration (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020).

2.1.2 Training & Development

The training & development function is about equipping staff with suitable work-related knowledge, skills, and competencies (Murphy et al., 2018; Noe and Kodwani, 2018). The training & development function can lead to favorable outcomes such as higher employee flexibility and improved individual and organizational performance (Afroz, 2018; Armstrong and Taylor, 2020; Li et al., 2016). The positive training and development lead to favorable employee outcomes including employee commitment and work performance (Schreuder et al., 2020; Slatten et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Promotion Opportunities

Promotion opportunities are about enabling employees to progress in their careers and move up in the organizational hierarchy (Sobaih et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016). If internal promotion opportunities are provided to staff, it can lead to increased perception of meaningful work and growth opportunities for staff and contribute to other favorable outcomes such as reduced turnover intention and increased motivation (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020; Busari et al., 2017; Sokhanvar et al., 2018). It also enhances staff commitment, and attachment towards the organization.

2.1.4 Job Security

Job security is about assuring staff about continuity of their job and not at risk of losing (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020; Khoo et al., 2017). By providing job security to its staff, an organization can increase its staff commitment and productivity. If organizations provide job security to their employees, it gives staff the psychological safety that their jobs are secure; so they can concentrate on their work rather than being worried about losing the job (Lambert et al., 2009).

2.1.5 Autonomy

Autonomy refers to decision-making power delegated to staff to ensure smooth performance of the work (Burcharth et al., 2017; Kotrlik and Higgins, 2001). Autonomy is also known as independence, freedom, and discretion provided to staff related to their work. Employees who possess higher autonomy feel being trusted and are motivated to do extra for their organization and job (Hess and Jepsen, 2009). On the other hand, employees who do not possess enough autonomy, feel pressured, stressed, and intend to leave the organization.

2.1.6 Communication

In the organizational context, communication from the management of the organization enables employees to clarify issues and work responsibilities and reduce uncertainty and confusion (Den Hartog et al., 2013; Xi et al., 2016). Good two-way communication assists employees in understanding why certain decisions are made; while top management also gets feedback from employees on different issues. Effective communication is found to be associated with employee performance, commitment, and trust in the organization (Brewster and Hegewisch, 2017; Yue et al., 2019).

2.2 Intention to Quit

Intention to quit refers to the degree to which staff wants to leave the company (Chang et al., 2013). Intention to quit is an employee attitude and leads to actual turnover. It is used frequently in management research since it is easier to measure and found to be a good predictor of actual turnover behavior (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2016; Haider et al., 2020).

2.3 Psychological Contract Breach

The psychological contract refers to an employee's belief in a reciprocal obligation between the employee and the organization. The psychological contract is a subjective and perceptual-based concept and varies from individual to individual (Heffernan and Rochford, 2017). Its formation starts from the recruitment process and is shaped based on various events during the employment tenure. The psychological contract is influenced by the relationship between employer and employee and both parties adjust accordingly during this process (Forza, 2002; Hair Jr et al., 2017). If one party such as an employer or employee fails to perform its duties as per the expectations, it leads to a situation called a 'psychological contract breach. Empirical work shows that employees who perceive that employer fails to fulfill its responsibilities will be dissatisfied with their job and may switch jobs if a suitable alternative opportunity arises (Chen et al., 2018; Harley, 2020).

2.4 Relationship between HPWS and Employee Turnover Intention

Previous studies show that if an organization employs HPWS, it creates a supportive work environment and thus further affects the employee's emotional attachment to the organization (Chen et al., 2018; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Several studies focused on the positive outcomes of HPWP on employees such as job satisfaction and turnover intention (Chen et al., 2018; Johnstone, 2016). The study utilizes the AMO theory as proposed by Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg for developing the hypothetical model. Accordingly, an individual's performance is based on three functions namely the ability of an individual to perform the relevant task (A), an individual's motivation to perform a certain task (M), and the availability of opportunity for an individual to perform (O). Once, ability, motivation, and opportunity are present, it leads to employee performance. Since HPWS can contribute directly in all three aspects including ability by means of recruitment and training; motivation by means of offering job security and compensation; and opportunity by means of providing autonomy; therefore, we propose that HPWS can influence staff behavior and attitude including the intention to leave. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses;

H_{1a}: Recruitment and selection significantly influence staff turnover intentions.

H_{1b}: Training and development significantly influences staff turnover intentions.

H_{1c}: Job security significantly influences staff turnover intentions.

H_{1d}: Promotion significantly influences staff turnover intentions.

H_{1e}: Autonomy significantly influences staff turnover intentions.

H_{1f}: Communication significantly influence staff turnover intentions.

2.5 Relationship between HPWP and Employee Perception of PCB

The HPWS dimensions influence PCB since it enables staff to perform at their job and gives a signal about how much value management places on staff. In other words, if an organization implements suitable HPWS, it leads to the fulfillment of staff expectations from the management and at the same time, enables an individual to fulfill the management expectations about performance. Thus, it can be argued that HPWS can influence staff PCB as emphasized in other studies. Based on previous studies' findings, we propose the following hypotheses.

H_{2a}: Recruitment and selection has a significant effect on PCB

H_{2b}: Training and development has a significant effects on PCB

H_{2c}: Job security has a significant effect on PCB

H_{2d}: Promotion has a significant effects on PCB

H_{2e}: Autonomy has a significant effect on PCB

H_{2f}: Communication has a significant effect on PCB

2.6 Mediating Role of PCB between HPWP and Employee Turnover Intentions

The relationship between HPWS and employee perceived psychological contract is also established in earlier studies. Furthermore, the perceived psychological contract by employees which is our proposed mediating variable is also found to be influencing staff behavior and attitude including organizational citizenship behavior, intention to quit, job satisfaction, and commitment. If employees perceive a negative or broken psychological contract, it possibly leads to attitudinal changes such as job dissatisfaction among the staff. Employee intention to leave the organization is also an attitudinal outcome of employee PCB. Furthermore, since both HPWP and employee turnover intentions lead to employee turnover intentions, so we propose that in this process, the PCB may work as a mediator. Here, we can use the input, process, and output models. Accordingly, the HPWP works as an input, PCB works as a process, and turnover intention is output. Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses.

H_{3a}: PCB mediate the relationship between recruitment & selection and employee turnover intention.

H_{3b}: PCB mediate the relationship between training & development and employee turnover intention.

H_{3c}: PCB mediate the relationship between job security and employee turnover intention.

H_{3d}: PCB mediate the relationship between promotion and employee turnover intention.

H_{3e}: PCB mediate the relationship between autonomy and employee turnover intention.

H_{3f}: PCB mediate the relationship between communication and employee turnover intention.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study is based on a quantitative approach and used a cross-sectional survey design for data collection. By cross-sectional means a one-time data collection from the participants.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population of the study is all employees in the IT Sector in Oman estimated to be around 12000 staff. From this population, 15 IT firms as sampling frame are selected with a population of about 750. We utilized the sample size calculator from [Kotlik and Higgins \(2001\)](#) based on the .03 margin of error, and 5% alpha level, the minimal required sample size is 119.

3.3 Data Collection

The data is collected using the online Google form tool. A total of 278 questionnaires is distributed among the staff of the selected firms with the help of the HR Office of respective firms. A total of 124 staff members filled the survey with a response rate of 44.6%. The questionnaire was based on an adapted measure.

3.4 Measures

The scale for HPWS is adapted from Kehoe and Wright consist of 24 items where each dimension is measured by 4 items ([Kehoe and Wright, 2013](#)). The measure for turnover intention consists of 4 items adapted from O'Reilly Chatman, and Caldwell. PCB is measured by 5 items and adapted from Robinson and Wolfe-Morrison.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data once collected is checked for any discrepancies and analyzed using the AMOS software. The analysis included Confirmatory Factor Analysis for establishing reliability and validity; and path analysis for hypotheses testing. Mediation analysis is tested using the [Baron and Kenny \(1986\)](#) approach by analyzing the indirect effects.

4 Results

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The analysis is based on two stages. In the first stage, Confirmatory Factor Analysis is used as a tool for confirming the reliability and validity of the adopted measures. The second stage consists of path analysis for testing the hypotheses.

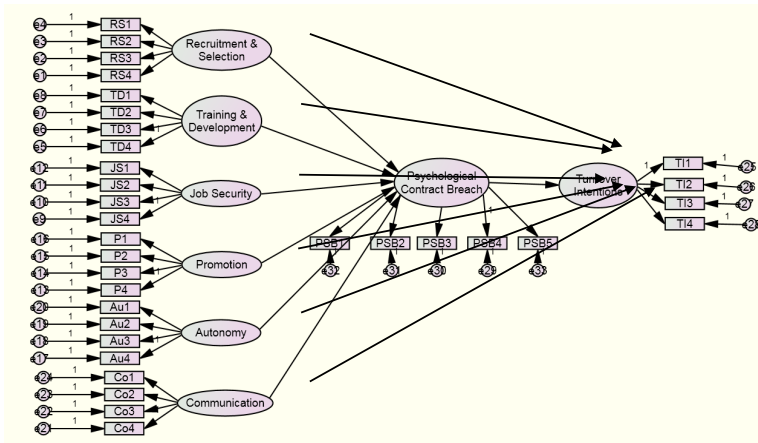


Figure 1: Initial CFA Model

The result of CFA shows that model had good fit statistics including RMR of 0.031, RMSEA of 0.064, GFI of .913, and CFI of .923. The recommended values are provided in the bracket based on the guidelines of [Browne and Cudeck \(1992\)](#) and (RMSEA<.08, RMR<.05, GFI>.90, CFI>.90). Since all items factor loadings are greater than 0.60 so it is an indication of satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, the AVE is above 0.50 for all constructs and MSV is less than the respective AVE so it is also an indication of good convergent validity. The value of above 0.70 for all Cronbach alpha and composite reliability indicate satisfactory reliability.

[Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) guideline is commonly used as a criterion for checking the discriminant validity. The criterion is based on a comparison of the Square root of AVE against inter-construct correlation. Thus, in the above table, the diagonal bold values are the square root of AVE and other values are inter-variable correlation values. The requirement is that the diagonal bold values should be higher than other values in their respective rows and column which are met as can be seen in the table. Thus, we can say that our variables have good discriminant validity.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

The results of the model based on the imputed factor score is provided as follows:

Results show that for the first set of hypotheses, recruitment & selection ($\beta=-.322, P<.05$), training & development ($\beta=-.231, P<.05$), job security ($\beta=-.431, P<.05$), and communication ($\beta=-.467, P<.05$) exerted negative and significant influence on staff turnover intentions; while, the result for promotion ($\beta=-.211, P>.05$) and autonomy ($\beta=-.119, P>.05$) turned out to be negative but insignificant. The result for the second set of hypotheses shows that recruitment & selection ($\beta=-.554, P<.05$), job security ($\beta=-.319, P<.05$), and autonomy ($\beta=-.121, P<.05$) exerted negative and significant effects on staff perceived PCB; while, the results for training and development ($\beta=-.232, P>.05$), promotion ($\beta=.091, P>.05$), and communication ($\beta=.061, P>.05$) turned out to be insignificant.

Table 4.1: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variables/ Construct	Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	Maximum Shared Variance
Recruitment & Selection	RS1	.761	.880	.879	.648	.321
	RS2	.866				
	RS3	.676				
	RS4	.898				
Training & Development	TD1	.989	.924	.922	.748	.327
	TD2	.871				
	TD3	.881				
	TD4	.841				
Job Security	JS1	.856	.760	.759	.759	.225
	JS2	.787				
	JS3	.934				
	JS4	.902				
Promotion	P1	.915	.962	.961	.860	.442
	P2	.934				
	P3	.956				
	P4	.905				
Autonomy	Au1	.856	.939	.938	.791	.398
	Au2	.866				
	Au3	.987				
	Au4	.843				
Communication	Co1	.831	.879	.878	.645	.221
	Co2	.845				
	Co3	.756				
	Co4	.778				
PCB	PCB1	.881	.968	.967	.855	.266
	PCB2	.831				
	PCB3	.982				
	PCB4	.945				
	PCB5	.976				
Turnover Intentions	TI1	.855	.943	.942	.804	.387
	TI2	.851				
	TI3	.893				
	TI4	.983				

Model Fitness: $\chi^2=1144$, $df=367$, $\chi^2/df= 3.11$, $RMSEA=.064$, $RMR=.031$, $GFI=.913$, $CFI=.923$

Table 4.2: Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
R&C	.805	.656	.768	.544	.581	.691	.454	.552
T&D	.656	.865	.454	.487	.667	.432	.552	.506
JS	.678	.454	.871	.676	.665	.498	.541	.540
Pr	.544	.487	.676	.889	.565	.543	.661	.643
Au	.581	.667	.665	.565	.812	.431	.587	.550
Co	.691	.432	.498	.543	.431	.803	.332	.365
PCB	.454	.552	.541	.661	.587	.332	.924	.562
TI	.552	.506	.540	.643	.550	.365	.562	.897

Table 4.3: Regression Weights

H.No.	Paths	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
H _{1a}	R&S>TI	-.322	0.045	-7.15556	.000	Supported
H _{1b}	T&D>TI	-.231	0.054	-4.27778	.000	Supported
H _{1c}	JS>TI	-.431	0.121	-3.56198	.000	Supported
H _{1d}	PR>TI	-.211	0.112	-1.88393	.057	Not Supported
H _{1e}	Au>TI	-.119	0.076	-1.56579	.061	Not Supported
H _{1f}	Co>TI	-.467	0.123	-3.79675	.000	Supported
H _{2a}	R&S>PCB	-.554	0.224	-2.47321	.040	Supported
H _{2b}	T&D>PCB	-.232	0.276	-0.84058	.081	Not Supported
H _{2c}	JS>PCB	-.319	0.098	-3.2551	.000	Supported
H _{2d}	Pr>PCB	.091	0.081	1.123457	.078	Not Supported
H _{2e}	Au>PCB	-.121	0.028	-4.32143	.000	Supported
H _{2f}	Co>PCB	.061	0.091	0.67033	.234	Not Supported

4.3 Mediation Testing

The mediation analysis is conducted by treating person-job fit and person-organization fit as independent variables, employee creativity as a dependent variable, and career commitment as mediators. Based on the guideline of Baron and Kenny's classical approach, we analyzed the indirect effects for testing mediation. We performed mediation analysis by using the direct and indirect effects based on bootstrap procedures (5000 samples) and bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (90%).

Our analysis of indirect effects shows that recruitment & selection ($\beta=-.245, P<.05$), training & development ($\beta=-.131, P<.05$), promotion ($\beta=-.167, P<.05$), and autonomy ($\beta=-.124, P<.05$) significantly exert influence on turnover intention while mediated by the PCB, whereas, results for job security and communication turned out to be insignificant. Based on these results, we conclude that PCB partially mediates between HPWS and employee turnover intentions.

Table 4.4: Mediation Analysis

H.No.	Path	Total Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Remarks
H _{3a}	R&S>PCB>TI	-.567	-.322	-.245**	Supported
H _{3b}	T&D>PCB>TI	-.481	-.231	-.131*	Supported
H _{3c}	JS>PCB>TI	-.403	-.431	.028	Not Supported
H _{3d}	Pr>PCB>TI	-.378	-.211	-.167*	Supported
H _{3e}	Au>PCB>TI	-.243	-.119	-.124*	Supported
H _{3f}	Co>PCB>TI	-.559	-.467	-.092	Not Supported

***<.001, **<.01, *<.05

5 Discussion

Testing the effects of HPWS dimensions on employee turnover intention was the first objective of the study. We found support for the effects of HPWS dimensions on staff turnover intention. These findings are matching with the findings of earlier studies including (Chen et al., 2018; Den Hartog et al., 2013). The findings are also consistent with the AMO theory. Additionally, we found support for the effects of HPWS dimensions including recruitment & selection, job security, and autonomy on staff PCB. Previous studies also match with the findings of our study. Testing the mediating role of PCB between the HPWS and employee turnover intentions was the third objective of the study. We found partial support for the mediation of PCB since three indirect effects including recruitment & selection, training & development, promotion, and autonomy turned out to be significant thus supporting our mediation hypotheses. These results support the earlier findings and extend our understanding of how HPWS influences staff turnover intention.

6 Practical Implications

This research has a number of practical implications. IT firms in Oman need to give greater attention to the HPWS to fully develop and utilize its talent. IT firms in Oman must monitor staff turnover and PCB perception and take efforts to reduce such negative behavior and attitude among staff. IT firms in Oman need to take an overall developmental approach consistent with the soft version of HRM and based on the philosophy of HPWS to fully develop and engage the staff at work.

7 Limitations

The study limitations are a small sample size, a single method of data collection, and perceptual measure-based data. Future researchers can overcome these limitations by using a more robust method of data collection. Since many demographic factors also influence staff turnover intention so it can also be an avenue for future research by testing demographic factors as mediators or moderators between HPWS and turnover intentions.

8 Conclusion

The results of our research show that HPWS dimensions have an impact on employee turnover intentions and perceived PCB. Furthermore, we discovered evidence supporting PCB's mediation effect between HPWS dimensions and staff turnover intention. As a result, we find that HPWS is a significant predictor of employee behaviour and attitude, indicating the need of paying more attention to HPWS. Our findings add to the HPWS literature by putting its employee outcomes to the test in a new setting. By using a process-oriented approach, we were able to confirm the AMO theory and get a better knowledge of HPWS and its employee results. Overall, we may conclude that HPWS has the potential to greatly influence employee behaviors and attitude, hence improving a company's overall performance and competitiveness.

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