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## HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES

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### ABSTRACT

Drawing on social information processing theory and social exchange theory, the present study aims to establish the relationship between high-performance work practices, and job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In line with strong ontological and epistemological assumptions, the study adopts survey strategy with a deductive approach. Data were garnered from randomly selected employees working in Capital Reliance Investments (Pvt) Ltd with a self-administered questionnaire. The results disclose a significant positive relationship between high-performance work practices and job satisfaction. Similarly, the study reveals a strong relationship between high-performance work practices and organisational commitment. The current study advances the extant knowledge in the spheres of high-performance work practices and employee attitudes, and proffers many useful practical implications.

**Keywords:** High-performance work practice, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, social exchange theory, social information processing theory

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## Introduction

Human capital is a strategic resource and its management through high-performance work practices is crucial for superior firm performance and sustainable competitive advantage (Grant, 1991; Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). Therefore, there should be a close fit between high-performance work practices and the firm's strategy (e.g. Grant, 1991). Studies maintain that high-performance work practices drive organisational effectiveness (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Huselid, 1995; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Wright, Dunford, & Snell, 2001) and firm's competitive advantage (e.g. Huselid, 1995; Sun, Aryee, & Law, 2007; Takeuchi, Chen, & Lepak, 2009) and consequently, high-performance work practices become increasing interest and being at a top of organisational and human resource management studies in recent years (e.g. Brinck, Otten, & Hauff, 2019; Han, Liao, Taylor, & Kim, 2018; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018; Martinaityte, Sacramento, & Aryee, 2019).

High-performance work practices have been recognised as an integrated bundle of practices leading to a high level of organisational performance than other constructs such as high-commitment management (e.g. Wood & Albanese, 1995), and high-involvement work practices (Pil & MacDuffie, 1996). By and large, high-performance work practices include wide ranges of well-thought-out practices such as formal training practices, selective recruitment, rigorous staffing practices, fair performance appraisal practices and procedures, better rewarding mechanism, etc. For instance, proper selection of employees may create a pool of talents and consequently, there is a possibility for a greater contribution towards organisational goals (Huselid, 1995; Takeuchi et al., 2009; Takeuchi et al., 2007). In a similar vein, rigorous recruitment and selection practice is an indication of value that an organisation has on its employees and superior performance appraisal practice spells out equal promotional opportunities, investment in training shows organisational commitment towards their employees, and empowerment in decision making, high wages and other benefits give recognition for their employees (Takeuchi et al., 2007). Notably, high-performance work practices have synergetic impact on organisational outcomes when it internally fits (Gerhart, Trevor, & Graham, 1996) and not always produce similar results, and studies on high-performance work practices and employees' attitudes are inconclusive (Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, & Kalleberg, 2000; Askenazy, Caroli, & Marcus, 2002; Guest, 2002).

There is ample evidence that job satisfaction of the employees is positively related to many organisational outcomes such as performance, lower intention to quit and withdrawal cognitions, low absenteeism, organisational citizenship behaviour, satisfied customers, etc. (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Platis, Reklitis, & Zimeras, 2015; Schmit & Allscheid, 1995; Soto & Rojas, 2019). However, the relationship between high-performance work systems and job satisfaction and commitment is often difficult to explain since human capital is less likely to be free traded and imitated (see Barney, 1991; Brinck et al., 2019; Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). Previous studies found a positive relationship between high-performance work practices and organisational outcomes, nonetheless, the validity of the findings have been questioned and the organisational outcomes are more complicated than typically is depicted (e.g. Wall & Wood, 2005).

In a nutshell, studies that have been investigated the relationship between high-performance work practices and job satisfaction and organisational commitment are limited and the findings are conflicting (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Askenazy et al., 2002; Gong, Law, Chang, & Xin, 2009; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Takeuchi et al., 2009). Notably, studies on high-performance work practices are lacking in Asian and other similar developing countries (see Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Taken previous studies together, the present study fills the gaps by answering an unanswered question that the extent to which high-performance work practices improves both job satisfaction and commitment in tandem. Therefore, the main aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between high-performance work practices and job satisfaction and organisational commitment. The findings of the study have vital implications for both managers and practitioners. First, the study discusses the needs for revitalising high-performance work practices for promoting employees' job satisfaction. Second, the study highlights the importance of high-performance work practices for developing a highly committed workforce in an organisation. This creates a form of social exchange relationships. On balance, the present study stressed the overriding importance of high-performance work practices in attaining organisational objectives. Further, the study made a theoretical contribution by unearthing the relationship between high-performance work practices and job satisfaction and commitment in a diverse cultural context.

## **Theory and hypotheses**

'High-performance work practices' is a means of attaining competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995) referring to interconnected well-thought-out human resource management practices that can contribute to enhancing employees' skills and efforts (Datta, Guthrie, & Wright, 2005; Huselid, 1995). As discussed earlier, high-performance work practices generally include rigorous recruitment and selection, rigorous staffing practices, effective training and development, flexible job assignments, fair and merit-based performance appraisal, competitive compensation, empowered decision making, extensive benefits, effective job design, team-based incentives, and skills-based pay (e.g. Datta et al., 2005; Delery & Shaw, 2001; Huselid, 1995; Lepak & Snell, 2002; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005). High-performance work practices have been associated with many organisational outcomes such as lower absenteeism, organizational citizenship behaviours, and a higher level of performance (Gong et al., 2009; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Meyer et al., 2002). Some studies highlight that high-performance work practices increase employee's job satisfaction (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Askenazy et al., 2002; Freeman & Kleiner, 2000; Godard, 2001; Guest, 2002; Harmon, Scotti, Behson, & Farias, 2003; Vandenberg, Richardson, & Eastman, 1999). For instance, job rotation, one of the components of high-performance work practices, is expected to provide mastering skills, sense of belongingness, and reduce the level of boredom and consequently, employees might feel a higher level of job satisfaction. Similarly, Macky and Boxall (2007) investigated the relationship between high-performance work practices and employees attitudes using a randomly selected national population sample. Their study provides clear evidence that high-performance practices are positively related to job satisfaction. Gürbüz (2009) investigated the effect of high-performance on employees' job satisfaction with

480 blue-collar employees of 35 larger firms located in Istanbul, Turkey. The study revealed a positive significant relationship between high-performance work practices such as participation in decision making, empowerment, job rotation, self-directed work teams, and contingent compensation, and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, some studies found a negative relationship between high-performance work practices and employee job satisfaction (e.g. Askenazy et al., 2002). Askenazy et al. (2002) argued that some high-performance work practices such as teamwork and job rotation, increase work pressure and potential conflicts among colleagues and therefore, employees might be less satisfied. Therefore, the findings are conflicting and the extant paucity of studies is not sufficed to make a firm conclusion on the relationship between high-performance work practices and employee job satisfaction. Strongly based on empirical evidence and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) that articulates that the environment in which employees operate affects employees' attitudes in an organisation and therefore, there should be an acceptable reason for any action, we make a prediction that

H<sub>1</sub>: High-performance work practices are accounted for significant variance in job satisfaction

Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1983), the present study assumes that when high –performance work practices are in place such as investment in form of training on employees, rewarding, superior compensation practices, etc., employees become bound to return (exchange) benefits to their organisation. This implies that the corollary exchange relationship is nurtured by high-performance work practices in which employees feel they are obliged to contribute to the attainment of organisational goals (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003). Studies suggest that high-performance work practices can shape employee attitudes (Whitener, 2001) and the relationship between high-performance work practices and organisational commitment are not clear. The seminal study of Allen and Meyer (1990) delineates three components of organisational commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. The affective comment refers to “employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.1), the continuance commitment is about “commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization” (p.1) and the normative commitment refers to “employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” (p.1). The committed employees demonstrate a high level of organisational performance and remain with their organisations. The employees' wiliness to stay longer is described under three scenarios: employees want to stay (affective commitment), employees need to stay (continuance commitment) and employees ought to say (normative commitment) (see Allen & Meyer, 1990). Previous studies have evidenced that organisational commitment is affected by work and organisational experiences of the employees (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Meyer et al., 2002). Therefore, it is believed that high-performance work practices promote employees to be held deep bonds with the organisation that enhance employees' commitment towards their organisations. Notably, employees remain with their organisation longer and consequently, employees' effectiveness, emotional attachments and longer stays would contribute to the organisational success (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Some studies found that high-performance work practices are positively related to organisational commitment (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Gürbüz, 2009; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Vandenberg et al., 1999; Wright et al., 2003). For instance,

Macky and Boxall (2007) investigated the relationship between high-performance work practices and employees' attitudes using a randomly selected national population sample. Their study provides clear evidence that high-performance practices are positively related to organisational commitment. However, studies provide that high-performance work practices could create three possible scenarios: win-win benefits for firms and employees (Machin & Wood, 2005); win-lose combinations; and lose-lose combinations (Boxall & Purcell, 2003). Strongly based on the extant literature, studies on high-performance work practices and organisational commitment are inconclusive and subject to country-culture specific nature. Consequently, we make a prediction that

H<sub>2</sub>: High-performance work practices are accounted for significant variance in organisational commitment

## Methods

Anchored in ontological and epistemological assumptions, the present study has adopted a deductive approach with "survey" research strategy. Research studies in financial sectors are scant and characteristics by large amounts of responsibility, longer working hours, tight working schedules and high pay that requires greater devotion and commitment to their work (e.g. Bielby, 1992; Hodson, 2004; Schieman, Whitestone, & Van Gundy, 2006). Therefore, financial companies are good case for exploring the proposed relationship. The data were collected from one of the financial companies, Capital Reliance Investments (Pvt) Ltd. Using a random sampling technique, a total of 100 questionnaires were issued by co-author and 90 of them were returned yielding a response rate of 90%. High-performance work practices were measured using a scale adopted from Takeuchi et al. (2007). The scale consists of 21 items including: 'Employees are involved in job rotation'; 'Employees are empowered to make decisions'; 'Jobs are designed around their individual skills and capabilities'; 'Selection is comprehensive (uses interviews, tests, etc.)'; and 'Selection emphasizes their ability to collaborate and work in teams'. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , and the results show acceptable reliability of the measure (Refer Table 2  $\alpha = .65$ ). Employee job satisfaction was measured using three-items borrowed from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh's (1979) Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ). The included three items are: (1) *All in all I am satisfied with my job* (2), *In general, I like working here*, and (3) *In general, I don't like my job*. The reliability test- Cronbach's  $\alpha$ - shows acceptable reliability of the measure (Refer Table 2  $\alpha = .74$ ). Similarly, the organisational commitment was measured with Allen and Meyer's (1990) scale. Sample item includes: 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization' (affective commitment). The reliability test- Cronbach's  $\alpha$ - shows acceptable reliability of the measure (Refer Table 2  $\alpha = .79$ ). All those questions were measured with Likert-scale where respondents were asked to show their agreement/disagreement on each statement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Discriminant validity and convergent validity of the measures have also been established before analysing the data.

## Results

Prior to testing hypotheses, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed and presented in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were males ( $n=54$ ; 60%) and the remaining 40% were females ( $n=36$ ). Almost 80% of the respondents were young 85.6% ( $n=77$ ) and only 6% of the respondents were above 50 years. Interesting, 72% of them were married and 28% were single. As for educational qualification, roughly half of the employees were degree holders and on average, the majority has 5 years working experience. 59% of the respondents were earning more than Rs. 40,000.

**Table 1: Demographic summary of responses**

Variables	Category	Number	Percentage %
Gender	Male	54	60%
	Female	36	40%
Age	20-30	42	46.7%
	30-40	35	38.9%
	40-50	8	8.8%
	Above 50	5	5.6%
Marital-Status	Married	65	72.2%
	Single	25	27.8%
Level of Education	Master degree	16	17.8%
	Bachelor degree	28	31.1%
	Advanced Level	25	27.8%
	Others	21	23.3%
Experiences	Below 1 year	23	25.5%
	1-5 years	38	42.2%
	6-10 years	15	16.7%
	Over 10 years	14	15.6%
Income	Below 20000	8	8.9%
	20000-30000	11	12.2%
	30000-40000	18	20%
	40000-50000	29	32.2%
	Above 50000	24	26.7%

Following the demographic description, the associations between focal variables were examined. Table 2 summarises mean values, standard deviation, bivariate-correlations, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in parenthesis. As

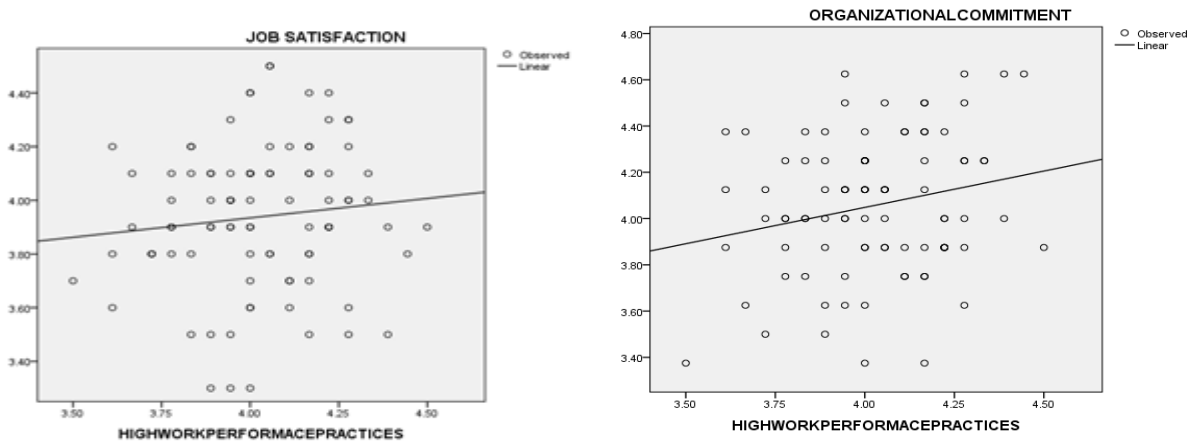
shown in Table 2, the respondents reported a high level of organisational commitment ( $M=4.06$ ;  $SD=.30$ ), followed by high-performance work practices ( $M=4.02$ ;  $SD=.21$ ), and job satisfaction ( $M=3.94$ ;  $SD=.27$ ). Taken together with the mean values of all focal variables, almost all respondents were agreed with the statements that indicate the presence of those variables in the study context. As seen in the same Table, high-performance work practice has a highly significant positive correlation with job satisfaction of employees ( $r=.611$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). As expected, results disclose strong positive correlations between organisational commitment and high-performance work practices ( $r=.588$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and between organisational commitment and job satisfaction ( $r=.288$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Alphas, and Bivariate Correlations**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1 High-performance work practices	4.02	.21	(.65)		
2 Job satisfaction	3.94	.27	.611**	(.74)	
3 Organisational commitment	4.06	.30	.548**	.288**	(.79)

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ;  $N=90$   
*M*, Mean; *SD*, Standard Deviation; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in parenthesis

The association and the patterns of the relationship are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Graphical presentation of the relationship**

Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis-testing. The  $H_1$  predicted that high-performance work practices are accounted for significant variance in job satisfaction was supported ( $\beta=3.37$ ,  $P < .01$ ). The results indicate that high-performance work practices have a significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction and thus accounted for significant variance in job satisfaction. In a similar vein, the hypothesis  $H_2$  surmised that high-performance work practices are accounted for significant variance in organisational commitment was also supported ( $\beta=3.31$ ,  $P < .01$ ). The results disclose that high-performance work practices

have a noticeable significant impact on organisational commitment and thus high-performance work practices explain significant variance in organisational commitment.

**Table 3: Hypotheses testing**

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t- statistics	Sig.
High-performance work practices----- ----→Job satisfaction	3.37	.611	1.95	$p < .01$
High-performance work practices----- ----→Commitment	3.31	.548	2.10	$p < .01$

### Discussion, contributions and conclusion

The present study aims to establish the relationship between high-performance work practices and employee attitudes. The findings show that high-performance work practices and job satisfaction are significantly positively related. The relationship explains that high-performance work practices increase employee job satisfaction and the findings are in line with previous studies: Appelbaum et al. (2000); Askenazy et al. (2002); Freeman and Kleiner (2000); Godard (2001); Guest (2002); Harmon et al. (2003); and Vandenberg et al. (1999). The high-performance work practices include rigorous staffing practices, rigorous recruitment and selection, effective training and development, flexible job assignments, fair and merit-based performance appraisal, competitive compensation, empowered decision making, extensive benefits, effective job design, team-based incentives, and skills-based pay. For instance, challenging jobs, intrinsically rewarding and employee participation in decision making create positive attitudes towards the organisations. The study also established a positive relationship between high-performance work practices and organisational commitment. The relationship explains that high-performance work practices increase organisational commitment. In another way, high-performance work practices make employees feel a stronger psychological identification and stronger intention to remain with employing organizations. The findings are consistent with Appelbaum et al. (2000); Gürbüz (2009); Kehoe and Wright (2013); Macky and Boxall (2007); Vandenberg et al. (1999); and Wright et al. (2003). Therefore, the current study lays emphasis on the need for high-performance work practices to create highly committed employees' atmosphere.

#### **Theoretical and practical implications**

The present study made theoretical contributions in two ways. First, the present study contributed to the extant literature by establishing a strong relationship between high-performance work practices, and job satisfaction and organisational commitment in tandem. The findings of the earlier studies of such relationships are inconclusive and therefore, our study supports for making a firm conclusion about the need of high-performance work practices in developing a highly satisfied and committed workforce. Second, previous studies connote that high-performance work practices are country-culture specific nature and thus



questioned the applicability of the findings from one cultural setting to another culture. Therefore, the present study contributed to the extant literature by unearthing the relationships in a diverse cultural context.

The findings of the study have useful practice implications for both managers and practitioners. First, the present study confirms a strong positive significant relationship between high-performance work practices and employee job satisfaction. The relationship underscores the importance of high-performance work practices in an organisation. Previous studies have found employee job satisfaction as a dominant factor contributing many favourable organisational outcomes such as high performance, lower intention to quit and withdrawal cognitions, low absenteeism, organisational citizenship behaviour, satisfied customers, etc. (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002; Platis et al., 2015; Schmit & Allscheid, 1995; Soto & Rojas, 2019). For instance, satisfied employees mould group cohesiveness and generate highly satisfied loyal customers as well. Therefore, managers and practitioners should think of designing and revitalising high-performance work practices for promoting employee job satisfaction. Second, the present study established another strong relationship between high-performance work practices and organisational commitment. This implies that high-performance work practices create highly committed employees and consequently, those employees remain with the organisation for longer and stronger (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). On balance, the organisation should have the best high-performance work practices for its success. Notwithstanding, some studies maintain that high-performance work practices are more expensive (e.g. Cappelli & Neumark, 2001; Datta et al., 2005; Guthrie, 2001) and therefore, the organisation should assess the benefits against the cost before implementing the practices.

Although the current has made several theoretical and practice contributions, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study was based on cross-section design and thus, difficult to make a strong causal relationship. Therefore, future studies should focus on the time-lagged approach or longitudinal design. Since the present study collected the data from a single-source self-administered questionnaire, there might be a portent of common method variance. Moreover, future studies should consider the interaction effects of the relationship between high-performance work practices and job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Further, similar studies across many exogenous countries and occupations are warranted.

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