

THE EFFECT OF HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB EMBEDDEDNESS

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Abstract

This study ascertained the impact of high performance work practices (HPWS) on employee innovative behavior (EIB) through mediating role of job embeddedness (JE) of front line service employees in Pakistan hospitality sector. Data for this study were gathered from Front Line Service Employees (FLSEs) employed in four and five-star hotels in two waves with two weeks' time lag. The hypothesis and relationships were tested through Partial Least Squares (PLS). The results suggest that job embeddedness mediates the relationship between high performance work practices and employee innovative behavior. In particular, front line service employees in presence of high performance work practices display high job embeddedness, and exhibit innovative behaviors at work. Findings of this study are likely to guide service firms regarding the impact of performance enhancing human resource practices on job embeddedness which in turn will motivate those employees to produce innovation related behaviors at work.

Keywords: High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs), Job Embeddedness (JE), Employee Innovative Behavior (EIB), Front Line Service Employees (FLSEs)

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1. Introduction

The world's advanced and emerging economies have shifted their focus from products to services (Thakur & Hale, 2013) as almost two-third of the global GDP contribution comes from service sector only (Ostromet al., 2010). This growing service economy also brings certain serious challenges to the service firms. For instance, growing competition in services sector has resulted in a highly competitive market where service firms are fighting for their market share (Ostrowski et al.,1993). To survive this intense competition, service firms need to constantly innovate (Kindstrom et al., 2013) as innovation has become a strategic priority for many firms and countries (Slater et al., 2014). Among various innovation levels, employee innovative behavior (EIB) is a cornerstone of organizational innovation (Janssen et al., 2004).

EIB is defined as initiatives taken by employees for introducing and implementing new products, services, markets and problem solving techniques or combinations of such into the firm (Amo & kolvereid, 2005).Scholars have affirmed the importance of EIB in facilitating firms to attain competitive edge and enhancing individual job performance (Janssen et al., 2004; Kanter, 1988; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Thus, maximizing the employees' innovative potential in current knowledge-driven economy has become major goal of every service firm (Johnston & Bate, 2013).

Owing to the importance of EIB for service organizations (Hu et al., 2009), there has been a burgeoning interest by academicians in understanding the predictors of employee's innovative work behavior (Park et al., 2014). Despite the increased literary focus on studying EIB and its antecedents (Cerne et al., 2017), still very little is known regarding what fosters innovation at the individual level particularly among frontline service employees (FLSEs) (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Janssen, 2000). Present study has, therefore, been designed to address this gap.

Human resource (HR) practices play crucial role in motivating workforce to exhibit creative job outcomes (De Saá-Pérez &Díaz-Díaz, 2010; Cooke&Saini, 2010) by identifying, developing, assessing, and compensating EIB (Ramamoorthy et al., 2005; Veenendaal & Bondarouk, 2015).Following this theme, high performance work practices (HPWPs) which constitute the bundle of workforce performance enhancing HR practices (Becker &Huselid, 1998; Guthrie, 2001; Huselid, 1995) are expected to enhance EIB among FLSEs.

HPWPs include staffing selectivity, employment security, employment security, internal career/promotion opportunities, training, teamwork, rewards, work-family balance and empowerment (Cho et al., 2006; Tang & Tang, 2012). These practices have been found to affect FLSEs work-related behaviors and performance (Karatepe, 2013) and employees perceive the existence of HPWPs as organizational seriousness and commitment towards developing human capital development essential for enhancing productivity and service capacity (Tang & Tang, 2012).

In highly competitive market environment, managers at hospitality firms try to focus on acquiring and retaining high performing FLSEs which are crucial for quality services delivery. Job embeddedness (JE) as an employee retention strategy can play central role in this regard. It comprises of three dimensions: fit, sacrifice and links (Mitchell et al., 2001). JE has its importance in organizational settings as it contains features that motivate an employee to continue their jobs (Karatepe, 2012) and stay with their current organization (Holtom et al., 2008). Employees with high JE exhibit innovative behaviors (Coetzer et al., 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Also, research has found JE's mediating role between HPWPs and employee outcomes (Karatepe, 2016; Ferreira et al., 2017). Therefore, this study attempts to test whether JE is a mediator of the relationship between HPWPs and EIB.

The current study offers following key contributions. First, this study intends to examine the link between HPWPs and EIB of the FLSEs employed in hotels by focusing on important role of HPWPs in fostering innovation related behaviors among employees. Second, this study intends to examine mediating role of JE in the relationship between HPWPs and EIB. Third, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding JE antecedents in comparison with its consequences (Collins et al., 2014; Holtom et al., 2012; Karatepe, 2013; Ng & Feldman 2011). Fourth, hospitality industry has been researched extensively in developed countries, however, in developing countries like Pakistan it is still relatively unexplored (Alasttal & Burdey, 2017). Besides enhancing current knowledge base, this study results will offer useful managerial implications regarding acquisition and retention of quality FLSEs who are expected to exhibit innovative behaviors.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Employee innovative behavior (EIB) comprise of behavioral tasks like generating, promoting and realizing idea (Janssen, 2001; Kanter, 1988; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Idea generation involves generating useful and novel ideas and considered to be the first phase of innovation process (Woodman et al., 1993). Whereas idea development phase is the one in which employees try to acquire management approval and mobilize support in favor of new ideas (Kanter, 1988). In idea realization phase, individuals try to transform approved ideas into valuable applications (Kanter, 1988). These different phases of EIB collectively produce behaviors that lead to improved process, product or services in markets (Orfila-Sintes & Mattsson, 2009).

Job Embeddedness (JE) has its importance in organizational settings as it contains features that motivate an employee to continue their jobs (Karatepe, 2012) and stay with their current organization (Holtom et al., 2008). It serves as a mechanism to connect employee with their job, organization, and society (Wilson, 2010) and as result employees feel socially involved within their organizations (Granovetter, 1985). It has become an important aspect of employee retention (Dong-Hwan & Jung-Min, 2012). JE is having three crucial dimensions: fit, links, and sacrifice. Felps et al., (2009) has described fit as an individual's perception regarding his compatibility with the community and organization. Links are the connections (informal or formal) linking or bridging people, institutions, or other persons (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). The number and importance of the links make an employee bound to his job, supervisor and organizational entities like teams (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Sacrifice describe the extent of the personal ease with which one can break links with institutes or persons by quitting current job or work and shifting to new job or community.

High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) has a growing literary focus on strategic HRM research has highlighted the use of performance enhancing HR practices to improve employees' skills, knowledge, motivation, abilities, and opportunity which produces needed individual as well as organizational consequences such as better financial performance (Gong et al., 2009), better service performance (Chuang & Liao, 2010), lower turnover (Sun et al., 2007) and individual creativity (Chang et al., 2014). Adoption and implementation of HPWPs has started to benefit western nations by providing sustainable competitive advantage (Combs et al., 2006). Recently, Pakistani firms have also

shifted their focus on adopting high performance HR practices to attain sustainable competitive advantage and tackle the global competition (Ahmad & Allen, 2015). Particularly HPWPs positively and significantly determine the employee performance (Akhtar et al., 2016). Three HR practices namely rewards, training and empowerment have been selected as indicators of HPWPs in current study. Few justifications can be put forward for their selection. First, hospitality industry consider training, rewards and empowerment to be the most effective HRM practices (Cho et al., 2006; Enz and Siguaw, 2000; Tang & Tang, 2012). Moreover, these practices were found detrimental for employee retention at Ritz-Carlton (Kotler et al., 2006). The simultaneous emphasis on these practices shows management commitment for improved service quality (Karatepe, 2013; Daskin et al., 2015). Moreover, very few studies have tested their effects on JE (Bergiel et al., 2009).

High Performance Work Practices and Job Embeddedness

Modern-day firms focus on utilizing human-specific practices to cultivate JE in employees (Mitchell et al., 2001). Previous research has suggested that training FLSEs in behavioral and functional skills enhance their potential to manage disgruntled and dissatisfied customers (Boshoff & Allen, 2000) by handling customer requests promptly leading to develop quality relationships customers (Cheng et al., 2008). Well-crafted training programs also enables employees in dealing with their own emotions while handling customers' requests and presenting solution to their problems (Moon et al., 2013). Training employees contribute towards their job stability (Shaw et al., 1998), improve fit between job and individuals, and also represent a sacrifice or significant loss if employee decides to change employer (Mitchell et al., 2001). Thus, provision of training opportunities develops a sense of job and organization attachment in employees and they normally stay in their current organizations and don't leave.

FLSEs can't provide quality services to customers without being empowered as its impossible to identify the exact tasks in advance desired to enhance customer satisfaction (Babakus et al., 2003). The FLSEs feel freedom in dealing customers' expectations, distant needs, wants and complaints (Lashley, 1995) and this empowerment can give them chances to become more creative at work (Milliman et al. (1999). Empowering FLSEs in their jobs will enhance their attachment with organization. Similarly, offering rewards and compensation to employees enhances their attachment and motivation with the organization (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Well defined performance based

rewards encourage employees to exhibit behaviors and attitudes mandatory in service delivery and complaint-handling process (Wirtz et al., 2008). Performance based rewards have been found to enhance employees desire to stay in their current organizations (Park et al., 1994).

The firms in hospitality settings (e-g., Ritz-Carlton) employ training, empowerment and rewards to retain quality FLSEs (Kotler et al., 2010). When FLSEs get training to enhance their abilities, knowledge and skills, receive authority to manage guest complaints and requests swiftly, and get both financial as well as non-financial rewards fairly, they usually stay at their current organizations and reciprocate with high levels of JE. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies where above mentioned HPWPs stimulated JE among FLSEs in Romanian (Karatepe & Karadas, 2012) and Iranian (Karatepe, 2013) hotels. Based on the foregoing discussion it is argued that HPWPs can increase JE of FLSEs. Consequently, it can be hypothesized:

H1. High Performance Work Practices are positively linked to Job Embeddedness

High Performance Work Practices and Employee Innovative Work Behaviour & EIB

The role and effective management of HR has become more vital in helping organizations to find ways in predicting EIB (Shipton et al., 2006). Employees contribute towards organizational innovative capacity through their intelligence, imagination and creativity (Mumford, 2000), following this it is argued that specific human resource practices can identify, develop, assess, and compensate EIB (Ramamoorthy et al., 2005; Veenendaal & Bondarouk, 2015). Thus, Human resource practices play an important role in motivating workforce to exhibit creative job outcomes (Cooke & Saini, 2010). Previous studies have highlighted the link between compensation (Alice & Hon, 2014), training (Dhar, 2015) and employee creativity. Following this theme, HPWPs are expected to enhance EIB among FLSEs. These practices have been found to affect FLSEs work-related behaviors and performance (Karatepe, 2013) and employees perceive the existence of HPWPs as organizational seriousness and commitment towards developing human capital development essential for enhancing productivity and service capacity (Tang & Tang, 2012). Based on the foregoing discussion it is argued that HPWPs can increase JE of FLSEs. Consequently, it can be hypothesized:

H2. High Performance Work Practices are positively linked to Employee Innovative Work Behaviour.

Job Embeddedness and Employee Innovative Work Behaviour EIB

Research has suggested the crucial role of JE in influencing employee attitude, behavior, and performance. For example, JE has been found to influence job satisfaction and performance (Wheeler et al., 2012) and workplace deviance (Avey et al., 2015; Crossley et al., 2007; Holtom et al., 2012). In addition, employees' JE proved to influence employee innovative behaviors (EIB) positively (Coetzer et al., 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2009) because of the following reasons. First, they develop favorable thoughts regarding their relationship with organization (fit). For instance, when employees feel themselves to be the part of the organizational culture and are treated in similar way as their fellow beings they usually reciprocate by sharing new ideas for service improvement and develop a habit of giving constructive feedback on regular basis for the betterment of service provision (Kwantes et al., 2007). Second, such employees develop strong social ties (links) in various firm networks which force them to come up with better job performance in comparison with their colleagues and meeting the expectations of the other members in networks. Moreover, close connections and links might help firm to spread innovative ideas with more ease among embedded employees.

Employees with high JE are expected to be engaged in innovative behaviors because creativity is often considered base for getting rewards (Welbourne et al., 1998). To avoid possible sacrifices connected with job loss, employees with high JE tend to exhibit innovation related behaviors to ensure organizational survival in highly competitive service environment. By doing this they want to secure their own jobs as well (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Thus, employees with high JE exhibit more in-roles and extra-roles (Lee et al., 2004). Following the above mentioned discussion, current study suggests that elevated levels of JE can make employees intrinsically motivated and they can come with exhibiting innovative behaviors. Consequently, it can be hypothesized:

H3. Job embeddedness is positively associated to Employee Innovative Work Behaviour

Notable scholars (Karatepe, 2013; Wheeler et al., 2010) have suggested the mediating effect of JE in organizational factors and job outcomes relationship. Similarly, research has also suggested its mediating role in HPWPs and employee behavioral outcomes relationship (e.g., Karatepe, 2013). JE has been found to mediate the relationship between HPWPs and turnover intention (Afsar et al., 2017; Bambacas&Kulik, 2013; Bergiel et al., 2009; Karatepe, 2013), extra role performance (Karatepe&Vatankhah, 2014). Regardless of the empirical evidence linking HPWPs to JE, and in turn to EIB which has been discussed above, scholars have yet to propose that JE is one of the mechanisms whereby provision of HPWPs enable employees to exhibit innovative behaviors at work.

This mediating mechanism can find theoretical support from social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). HPWPs are supposed to positively influence the social exchange relationships and make employees more willing to put extra effort into their job (Godard, 2001). The presence of HPWPs may foster JE which is line with the SET which involves social exchange relationships as a base for exchanging socio-emotional benefits. These types of benefits are open-ended and more personal obligations (Cropanzano et al., 2003) which are long-term and trust based (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994). Employees with high JE find that their current organization is meeting their all human resource needs and they are well fit into the job and organizational culture. In such situation, it is very less likely that they can switch by sacrificing organizational opportunities and benefits. Following this, employees become greatly embedded in their jobs and as a result these employees are expected to exhibit innovative behaviors which will benefit not only service firms and employees themselves but also customers. Therefore it can be hypothesized that:

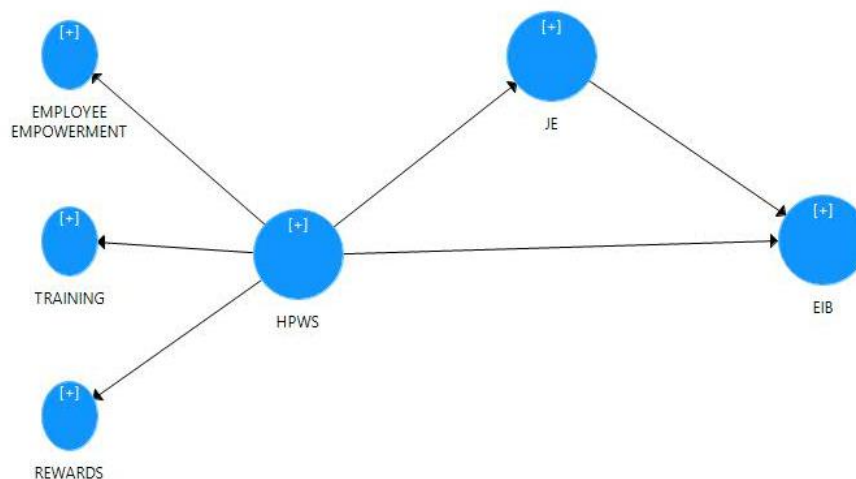
H4. Job embeddedness mediates the relationship between High Performance Work Practices and Employee Innovative Work Behaviour.

3. Methodology

Judgmental sampling technique has been used to specify study sample which is consistent with previous hospitality management literature studies (Karatepe & Karadas, 2015; Wang, 2013). The researcher approached the management of four and five-star hotels through a formal letter explaining the study objective and seeking data

collection permission. After getting formal permission from hotel management, concerned managers were requested to help in distribution of questionnaires to a broad range of FLSEs including customer / guest relation representatives, sales people, hotel front desk employees, waiters or waitresses etc. who were having everyday personal interaction with customers and spend their maximum time in customer dealings like receiving customer requests, selling them new services, solving different issues. Seven hundred questionnaires were distributed to FLSEs. Four hundred and sixty eight were returned. Out of these returned questionnaires thirty four were not completely filled thus they were excluded and making the usable response of four hundred and thirty four respondents (62 % response rate).

Based on the previous literature we adopted three HPWPs namely empowerment, training and rewards. This study adopted five items scale developed by Hayes (1994) to measure empowerment while rewards (5 items) and training (6 items) were measured by adopting scales developed by Boshoff and Allen (2000). JE was measured by a seven item scale developed by Crossley et al., (2007). Finally, for measuring EIB, a scale comprising of six items developed by Hu et al., (2009) was used in this study. The FLSEs were asked to respond on a five point likert scale. It is pertinent to mention that HPWPs was operationalized as second



order reflective-reflective construct while all the other variables were operationalized as first order reflective constructs.

Figure 1: Model of the Study

Methodology of Analysis

The current study has used SmartPLS 3 for conducting statistical analysis and estimating proposed relationships. PLS-SEM is a non-parametric, multivariate approach used to estimate path models with latent variables (Avkiran, 2017; Hair et al., 2017; Richter et al., 2016; Rigdon, 2016). There are several reasons for selecting this method. First, current research is of exploratory nature where the prime objective is to investigate the interrelationship among EIB, JE and HPWPs, a topic least discussed in the published research literature. Second, the PLS-SEM can handle complex frameworks (Hair et al., 2017; Ramayah et al., 2016; Richter et al., 2016), and is recommended for the mediating models (Cepeda et al., 2018; Nitzl et al., 2016; Real et al., 2014). Given the present research has an incremental character (JE as mediator), the PLS-SEM approach was suitable for the study. The Partial Least Squares technique is a powerful component-based method widely used in prior studies Farrukh, Khan, et al., 2017; Farrukh, Chong, Mansori, & Ravan Ramzani, 2017; Farrukh, Wei Ying, & Abdallah Ahmed, 2016; Farrukh, Ying, & Mansori, 2016, 2017; Riaz, Farrukh, Rehman, & Ishaque, 2016).

In terms of analysis, PLS-SEM involves two steps (Andersen & Gerbing, 1988). In the first step measurement model is evaluated by examining discriminant validity (DV), convergent validity (CV) and internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability is measured through composite reliability (CR) scores. The current results indicate that the CR scores of all constructs exceeded the recommended criterion of 0.7 (Avkiran, 2017; Nunnally, 1978), demonstrating high internal consistency or the appropriateness of the scales used in this study. Next, constructs CV was measured through factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2017). A factor loading should be 0.708 or higher, and, 0.70 considered close enough to be acceptable (Hair et al., 2011). However, indicators with weaker factor loadings (i.e., 0.40 to 0.70) can be retained if other indicators possess high loadings, and overall construct should explain at least 50% variance (AVE = 0.50) (Hair et al., 2017).

DV was assessed through Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) approach (Henseler et al., 2015). To achieve DV, the HTMT value should not be greater than the HTMT.85 value of 0.85 (Clark and Watson, 1995; Kline, 2011), or the HTMT.90 value of 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001; Teo et al., 2008). Results presented in table 2 are indicating that each construct in the model measures a unique subject and captures phenomena not presented by other constructs in the model.

Table 1. Measurement Model Evaluations

2nd Order	1st Order	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's' α
HPWPs	TRA	TRA1	0.7229	0.5069	0.8037	0.7583
		TRA2	0.7399			
		TRA3	0.6896			
		TRA4	0.7679			
		TRA5	0.6441			
		TRA6	0.7453			
	EMP	EMP1	0.7662	0.5345	0.8129	0.7696
		EMP2	0.8365			
		EMP3	0.8284			
		EMP4	0.6195			
		EMP6	0.8044			
	REW	REW1	0.7128	0.5564	0.8316	0.7349
		REW2	0.7781			
		REW3	0.8632			
		REW4	0.7453			
		REW5	0.7654			
	JE	JE1	0.7204	0.5638	0.8853	0.8437
		JE2	0.7797			
		JE3	0.7775			
		JE4	0.8471			
		JE5	0.7117			
		JE6	0.7564			
		JE7	0.7965			
	EIB	EIB1	0.7405	0.649	0.8753	0.8481
		EIB2	0.8196			
		EIB3	0.8858			
		EIB4	0.8735			
		EIB5	0.8476			
EIB6		0.8476				
EIB7		0.8245				

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	TRA	EMP	REW	JE	EIB
TRA	0.7125				
EMP	0.1969	0.7782			
REW	0.5256	0.2551	0.7252		
JE	0.1679	0.0875	0.0776	0.7841	
EIB	0.2231	0.3323	0.4462	0.2341	0.8764

To check the existence of normal relationship between the research variable a structural model was used to assess. The determination coefficient (R^2 values) and co-efficient of path (beta values) were used as parameters to find out the performance of data maintained the relationship hypothesized (Hair et al., 2014). With 5000 interactions a start-up procedure was conducted to find the common errors common errors and t-values to endorse statistical importance (Hair et al., 2014; 2011). R^2 assesses proposed model correctness (Ang et al., 2015). The change of degree in the dependent variable is highlighted by the path coefficient for every single independent variable (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2006; Pallant, 2007). Table 3 is showing the outcomes of the hypothesis checking by the start-up purpose of Smart PLS. It is also presented in Table 3 that path co-efficient was statistically important for both relations.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Beta	T statistics	Decision
Hypothesis 1	HPWPs is positively associated with JE	0.267	5.585	Supported
Hypothesis 2	HPWPs is positively associated with EIB	0.295	2.1285	Supported
Hypothesis 3	JE is positively associated with EIB	0.314	3.43	Supported

Mediation Analysis

Hair et al (2017) recommendations were adopted for operating the test for mediation. Table 4 presents the outcomes of test whereby giving support to H4 which means that JE facilitated the association between HPWPs and EIB

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

Indirect Path	Path coefficient	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
HPWPs ->JE ->EIB	0.36	4.77	0.00

4. Findings and Discussions

The result suggests that provision of HPWPs to FLSEs positively influences their JE. FLSEs working in HPWPs enrich environment develop informal and formal links with other employees and fit well with organization and the job. It becomes difficult for such employees to sacrifice valued things in their current job and they normally remain attached with their employer. Moreover, HPWPs (training, empowerment and rewards) presence gives strong message to FLSEs that management consider them their most important and crucial asset, invest heavily to develop and motivate them and work for their well-being through HPWPs. HPWPs also help service firms to make FLSEs emotionally and cognitively attach with job and organizational culture. Under these circumstances, FLSEs will feel that they are well fit with their jobs and organization and will not sacrifice benefits by leaving the organization. Leading service firms (e.g. Ritz-Carlton, Southwest Airlines) employ HPWPs like rewards, career opportunities and training to retain talented employees with them (Solnet et al., 2010).

Moreover, current study found that FLSEs with high JE are full of motivation and use their motivation to bring novel ideas for enhancing service level, display creative behavior at work and put maximum effort in presenting innovative solutions to customer problems. Finally, the findings recommend JE's mediating effect in HPWPs and EIB relationship. In presence of HPWPs, FLSEs perceive that their current organization is meeting their all human resource needs and they are well fit into the job and organizational culture. In such situation, it is very less likely that they can switch by sacrificing opportunities and benefits offered by the service firms and will exert their maximum energies in exhibiting innovative behaviors.

Theoretical implications

The present study contributes theoretically in numerous ways. First, present study empirically investigated the mechanism through which HPWPs can influence EIB. Second, with regards to HPWPs, current study suggested employing crucial mediating role of JE in HPWPs and EIB relationship by demonstrating the importance of strategic HRM to

services management literature. Third, very few studies have been conducted in exploring and determining EIB potential antecedents (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Rank et al., 2004). Thus, this study also contributed in this regard by investigating the relationship of EIB with JE and HPWPs which will enable the scholar to highlight crucial EIB antecedents that shape employee innovative behavior, rather than merely focusing on the outcomes of this behavior.

Fourth, present study also respond to earlier calls for inquiring potential antecedents of JE as very less studies have examined antecedents of JE (Holtom et al., 2012; karatepe, 2013) and scholars like Ng and Feldman (2011) expressed the need to investigate what factors enhances employees JE. Fifth, tourism industry has been researched extensively in developed countries, however, in developing countries like Pakistan it is still relatively unexplored (Alasttal & Burdey, 2017). This study can provide valuable insights to services marketing scholars in studying EIB concept in developing countries like Pakistan who has got a lot potential in terms of tourism.

Practical recommendations

The current study offers several practical implications to practitioners and firms in tourism settings. First, hotel managers should give significant importance to training and development programs. The training programs equip FLSEs with required skills, knowledge and abilities, enabling them to deal with customers current and future needs efficiently. Managers should train these front line employees in dealing customers with courtesy and efficiently resolving their complaints, as research has highlighted courtesy to be the most important hospitality dimension (Nameghi & Ariffin, 2013).

Second, service firms can retain quality FLSEs by rewarding them through fair performance appraisal mechanism. Hotel management should work on recognizing and rewarding those FLSEs who actively respond to customers' requests, answer their queries, suggest best possible solution to customer problems and contribute to teamwork successfully. Third, empowering FLSEs to take best possible decision to satisfy customers will help service firms to achieve competitive advantage in hospitality sector as FLSEs will be in a position to exhibit innovative behaviors. Fourth, managers should consider the simultaneous implementation of rewards, empowerment and training which will enhance JE.

Limitations and future research directions

Although, the current study offers valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge, still there exist few limitations which suggest possible future research prospects. First, because of time and resource constraints, data has been collected at single point of time. The respondents' condition and state is likely to change and fluctuate over time. Therefore, conducting future studies with repeat observations over longer periods of time from same respondents and performing longitudinal analysis is suggested which will help to arrive at more accurate assessment. Second, incorporating other potential HPWPs like career opportunities, selective staffing and job security into the conceptual model may provide useful insights to both literature as well as hospitality managers.

Third, in future, studies incorporating mediators like psychological capital, work engagement and organizational commitment in the indirect relationship of HPWPs and EIB should be done. Fifth, future research should identify and explore the role of some potential moderators like organizational context which may give strength and add extra value to the proposed relationships. Lastly, current study is conducted in Pakistan, a developing South Asian country. The existence of cross cultural differences in the hotel industry (Verbeke et al., 1996) may raise generalizability issue which can be solved by conducting cross-national studies (e.g. Turkey, China, Malaysia).

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