

**Evaluating High-Performance Work Systems and Employee
Performance in the Public Sector of AJK**

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Abstract

The study has been conducted to analyze the effects of the High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices on the employee performance in the public sector of Azar Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The study assumes the quantitative design to compare the contribution of training and development, performance appraisal, participation of employees and compensation practices to the improvement in efficiency in workforce and organizational performance. A modified structured questionnaire of A 5-point Likert scale consisted of 25 items based on Huselid (1995) was used to collect data from 220 employees of four public sector departments—Administration, Education, Health, and Finance. A 5-point Likert scale was used, and data were analyzed in SPSS 26 and descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis were used.

The results state that there is a positive and significant relationship between all the components of HPWS and the performance of employees. Training and development were the best predictors among them, then performance appraisal, employee participation, and compensation practices. The results support the resource-based view, which places much importance on strategic human resource practices as a strong internal resource that positively affects the performance of organizations. The research concludes that introducing HPWS practices within the public institutions can be of great benefit in motivating the employees, enhancing the level of accountability and the quality of the offered services.

The study has provided useful implications to policy-makers and administrators as it proposes that the incorporation of the principles of HPWS into the management system of the state institutions may reinforce the institutional capacity and ensure the sustainability of performance improvement.

Keywords: High-Performance Work System, Employee Performance, Public Sector, Human Resource Practices, AJK, SPSS

JEL Classification: M12, M53, M54, J24, O15

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

over the past few decades every organization in the world has realized that that human resources are their most valuable assets in organization. The concept of a High-Performance Work System (HPWS) emerged as a strategic approach to human resource management (HRM) that integrates a series of interrelated practices designed to improve employee skills, motivation, and participation, thereby enhancing organizational performance. The hidden philosophy of HPWS is the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model suggesting that employees work optimally when they have the necessary abilities, want to utilize them and are provided with a chance to do it effectively.

Originally, the HPWS models have been formulated and implemented in the private sector, where empirical research has shown that advanced HR practices (selective hiring, extensive training, rewards based on performance, and participatory decision-making) are closely related to enhanced productivity and profitability (Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998). Nonetheless, the government sector has not been left behind as pressure has continued to mount on the sector to make changes in the way they run their management systems to enhance efficiency, accountability and satisfaction to the citizens. The New Public Management (NPM) idea helped governments to import the practices in the private sector (including HPWS) to improve performance and responsiveness.

This increased focus notwithstanding, the implementation of HPWS in the government is a complex issue. Bureaucratic and political restrictions, the high level of accountability, and lack of autonomy causes the weakness of performance-based systems implementation by the public organizations. In addition, commitment to serving the people and equity issues are also intrinsic motivations that make a difference between the employees in the public sector and those in the private sector. Working with HPWS in the public sector, thus, needs contextual knowledge and empirical research to understand what HR practices are most effective in this context (Bryson and White, 2021).

Recent studies have begun to consider the results of HPWS in government institutions with indications that it is positively related to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational innovation. However, these findings are inconsistent and differing in settings and are frequently founded on a small or fragmented measurement models. This has necessitated the need to conduct strong empirical research studies that will assess HPWS practices in public organizations by using the strong analytical tools like SPSS to produce statistically significant evidence.

Research Question

The present study is guided by the following central research question:

To what extent do High-Performance Work System practices influence employee and organizational outcomes in the public sector?

To explore this question comprehensively, the study further addresses several sub-questions:

Which dimensions of HPWS—ability, motivation, or opportunity—are most strongly associated with organizational performance in public institutions?

Do employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction and commitment, mediate the relationship between HPWS practices and performance outcomes?

How do organizational characteristics, such as hierarchy, unionization, and sectoral type, moderate the relationship between HPWS and performance?

What statistical evidence can be generated through SPSS analysis to validate the reliability and effectiveness of HPWS in public organizations?

Problem Statement

Low productivity, bureaucratic inflexibility, and employee lack of motivation in the various institutions of public sector remain a common challenge of developing and developed countries. Conventional people systems, which are founded on standard pay, promotions according to seniority and minimal training, have not successfully involved the public employees towards meeting the institutional objectives. Although the private sector has managed to use HPWS to improve efficiency and innovation, its application as far as the public sector is concerned is not fully explored.

A number of studies have tried to study HPWS within a public context, yet most of them have used models related to the private sector without considering proper contextualization. More so, the available studies are usually not methodologically rigorous or do not utilize thorough statistical validation. This vacuum has given the policy makers and administrators inadequate empirical data to drive HR reforms in the institutions of the public services.

Therefore, the research gap of this paper is the insufficient amount of empirical knowledge on how HPWS practices work in the specific context of the public sector organizations and whether these systems can have any meaningful use in enhancing employee performance, job satisfaction, and institution-level performance when examined using statistical methods in SPSS.

Objectives of the Study

To identify and measure key HPWS practices (ability, motivation, and opportunity) within public organizations.

To validate the reliability and internal consistency of HPWS indicators using SPSS tools such as Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis.

To assess the direct impact of HPWS on organizational performance and employee attitudes

To explore the mediating role of job satisfaction and commitment in the HPWS—performance relationship

To analyze how contextual variables (e.g., sector, hierarchy, and employee status) moderate the effectiveness of HPWS.

To provide evidence-based policy recommendations for enhancing HR practices in the public sector.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance

The study represents the contribution to the literature in the field of HRM by moving the framework of HPWS beyond the private sector and experimenting it in the setting of the public service agencies. The theoretical foundations of the AMO model allow the study to add some theoretical clarity to the interactions between individual and organizational factors to influence the performance results.

Methodological Significance

The research focuses on intensive statistical tests through SPSS and makes sure the study results are valid and reliable. The research has provided a clear and reproducible way of conducting the study of HR practices within complex organizations through the application of factor analysis, correlation, regression and mediation models (Field, 2013).

Practical Significance

The results are helpful for policymakers and leaders in the public sector know the most effective HR practices that can help promote high performance. The study provides practical information in applying a combination of practices that would produce the best results to be used in designing training programs, performance management systems, and employee engagement strategies that can be used in line with the values of the public service.

Social Significance

Lastly, improvement of HR systems within the government sector directly influences delivery of services, governance and government satisfaction among the citizens. Strengthening human resource practices contributes to more responsive, transparent, and effective institutions that better serve the public interest.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The idea of HPWS has been developed on the background of strategic human resource management (SHRM) literature, which regards HR practices as the primary contributors to the organizational success. HPWS can be described as a coordinated system of HR practices that aim to increase the capabilities, motivation, and the possibilities of the employees to be productive (Boxall and Macky, 2009). In contrast to the conventional HR strategies, HPWS focuses on the interdependence of HR practices and claims that such practices produce more performance in an organization when undertaken collectively and not separately.

The most popular types of HPWS practices are selective recruitment, training and development, performance-based compensation, involvement of employees, job security, information sharing, and participative management (Appelbaum et al., 2000). The practices have the net effect of creating a high-commitment work environment, which results in better productivity, innovation, and service quality.

Huselid (1995) proved that effects of the bundles of HR practices positively influence employee turnover, productivity, and financial performance. Since that time the research on HPWS has grown in sectors and regions making it a key construct in

strategic HRM. Most of these studies were however carried out within private or profit making organizations and there was a gap in knowledge of how HPWS works within a public service setting.

The Ability Motivation Opportunity (AMO) Model

The AMO model provide the foundational theoretical background of the HPWS research. It implies that the performance of any organization is determined by how well employees are able to perform at work, their desire to work hard, and the chance to make a difference (Jiang et al., 2012). HPWS practices such as training (ability), incentive-based rewards (motivation), and participatory decision-making (opportunity) are designed to strengthen these three components. All these factors result in high individual and organizational performance when they interact.

The AMO model also support to analyze how HR practices can help employees to provide optimal services in situations where bureaucratic organization might limit their discretion in the context of public organizations.

The Resource-Based View (RBV)

Resource-Based View of the firm (RBV) is the assumed that sustainable competitive advantage is due to the resources that are valuable and non-substitutable, inimitable, and rare (Barney, 1991). In this sense, a competent, motivated and dedicated workforce is a strategic resource. HPWS helps in production of such human capital by harmonizing HR practices to increase employee capabilities and devotion.

The RBV is used in explaining how the involvement of human capital in terms of investments can result in better services even in the case where there is a limitation of financial or structural resources in a particular institution. It reinforces the argument that effective HR systems, rather than capital investments alone, are central to organizational success..

HPWS and Organization performance

Numerous studies in the field of the private sector prove that the HPWS has a positive relationship with a number of performance outcomes. Becker and Huselid (1998) investigate that organizations that adopt holistic HPWS get better productivity and profitability. Also, Guthrie et al. (2009) affirmed that HPWS improves the performance of a firm by increasing employee retention and motivation.

The association between HPWS and performance has been developed more in the public sector. The research carried out in the National Health Service of the UK (Powell et al., 2014) and the governmental agencies in Australia and New Zealand (Brown et al., 2019) discovered that HPWS practices enhanced teamwork, service delivery, and innovation. According to the research of Bryson and White (2021), the adoption of HPWS in the British public organizations was associated with higher managerial evaluations of performance and employee satisfaction.

Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between the essence of the public organizations and the private firms regarding their objectives, accountability as well as political influence. These disparities may have consequences on the

implementation and perception of HPWS. There is an indication that even though HPWS can lead to increased efficiency, it still needs to be adjusted towards the values of fairness, equity, and transparency that are inherent in the sphere of a public service (Kim, 2010).

HPWS and Employee Attitudes

In the relationship between the HPWS and performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction along with employee engagement are some of the key mediating variables. Research conducted by Kehoe and Wright (2013) and Li et al. (2019) established that HPWS positively affects positive work attitudes because it promotes trust, empowerment, and perceived organizational support. These attitudes play a vital role in ensuring that there are citizen-centered outcomes in the public institutions.

These findings are also supported by research carried out in developing contexts. As an illustration, Li et al. (2019) showed that HPWS had a great contribution to enhancing the performance of employees in the Chinese public health sector by raising job satisfaction and commitment. On the same note, it was found that HPWS practices positively affected organizational commitment among employees in Pakistani government organizations (Khan et al., 2021), which implies that HPWS is becoming more relevant in the emerging economies.

Problems of HPWS in the Public Sector Implementation

Implementing HPWS in public institutions has a number of challenges even though it has potential benefits. The HR practices are often constrained because of bureaucratic levels, minimal managerial discretion and strict pay scales (Perry and Wise, 1990). Additionally, there are several stakeholders, who are in charge of public organizations therefore it is hard to directly associate performance to personal rewards.

Institutional or cultural barriers are also involved. Employees in the public sector tend to appreciate job security and fairness as opposed to performance-based rewards. Also, the introduction of HPWS practices may be hindered by resource constraints and change resistance. Subsequently, contextual adaptation, leadership devotion, and favorable organizational culture is critical to success (Demortier et al., 2014).

Research Gap

Although there is recent research on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) in the context of developed and the private sector, a little research has been conducted to evaluate its influence in state institutions of developing countries like Azar Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The majority of the literature uses Western constructs that do not take into account local administrative and cultural specificities (Bryson and White, 2021; Brown et al., 2019). Furthermore, empirical validation with the help of such tools as SPSS is not always provided or not carried out in a consistent manner.

This research fills these gaps through a context-based quantitative research of the concept of HPWS within the public department of AJK, which will determine the impact of training, appraisal, participation, and compensation on the performance of employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this study was a quantitative research design to investigate the effects of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on employee performance within the Azar Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) public sector. Quantitative approach was selected due to the fact that the relationships between the variables may be measured and the hypothesis can be tested statistically (Creswell, 2014). Through this design, the study would produce objective and generalizable results that would give an overview of how the employees in the public sector perceive and experience HPWS practices.

Population and Sample

The target population was the employees of four large public departments Administration, Education, Health, and Finance in AJK. Such departments were chosen because of the importance they have in delivery of services to the people and the various CRM structures. The sample size was 220 employees who participated in the study through the use of convenience sampling method. This sample was considered to be sufficient to perform credible statistic analyses, regression, and correlation, as it is recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2016).

Instrumentation

An instrument that was used to collect data was a structured questionnaire that had 25 questions based on the seminal work by Huselid (1995) on High-Performance Work Systems. The questionnaire was categorized into the segments which embraced different aspects of HPWS, such as training and development, performance appraisal, employee participation, selective hiring, and compensation practices. The adapted items were also checked by academic experts and modified towards contextual relevance to the public sector in AJK to achieve the validity.

Measurement Scale

The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale with one (strongly disagree) being the lowest and five (strongly agree) being the highest. This scale was able to measure the strength with which people agreed with each statement and offered interval level data, which can be analyzed with the help of statistics. A Likert scale also allows an increase in the reliability and comparability of the response (Likert, 1932).

Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected by using self-administered questionnaires, which were administered face-to-face and electronically to the four departments of the employees. Before the data was collected, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. The involvement was voluntary and the respondents were free to drop out any-time without incurring any

consequences. The concerned university research committee was contacted and got ethical approval.

Data Analysis Techniques

The statistical package used in the analysis of data was Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The three key steps of the analysis included:

Descriptive Statistics- to describe the nature of demographic traits and give an idea of the responses

Correlation Analysis- to analyze the strength and direction of the relationship among the HPWS variables and employee performance

Multiple Regression Analysis- to examine the predictive validity of HPWS practices on performance outcomes of employees.

Such statistical methods enabled to conduct strict testing of hypotheses of the study and assist in establishing a degree of the role of HPWS practices in performance improvements in the context of a public institution.

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated in order to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A value of above 0.70 was taken to be acceptable, which proved satisfactory reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The validity of the items in the questionnaire was assimilated with the expert review and the validity on the construct was validated with the statistical correlations as per the theoretical expectations.

Ethical Considerations

All the academic research guidelines on ethics were adhered to. The confidentiality of the participants was guaranteed, and no data was identified. The data obtained were academic only and the findings were presented in the form of aggregate data so as to ensure that anonymity and objectivity were upheld.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

The descriptive analysis shows that employees in the public sector of AJK generally hold positive views about High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices. Training and Development scored high ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.72$), indicating that employees are satisfied with learning and skill-building opportunities. Employee Performance also showed a strong mean ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.68$), reflecting overall good performance levels.

Performance Appraisal ($M = 3.76$) and Employee Participation ($M = 3.69$) suggest moderate satisfaction with evaluation and involvement processes. However, Compensation Practices had the lowest mean ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.79$), highlighting limited satisfaction with reward systems.

Overall, the results suggest that while training and performance levels are strong, improvements in compensation and participation could further enhance motivation and effectiveness among public sector employees.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Training & Development	3.98	0.72
Performance Appraisal	3.76	0.81
Employee Participation	3.69	0.74
Compensation Practices	3.54	0.79
Employee Performance	4.02	0.68

Correlation Results

The correlation analysis reveals that all the study variables have positive and significant correlations. Performance Appraisal ($r = .62$, $p < .01$), and Training and Development ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) are seriously correlated with Employee Performance, which means that the relevant systems of fair evaluation and unceasing learning contribute greatly to the improvement of performance.

Other significant associations with performance are Employee Participation ($r = .55$, $p < .01$) and Compensation Practices ($r = .49$, $p < .01$), implying that engagement in the decision-making process and proper rewards can lead to improved performance.

On the whole, the findings reinforce the hypothesis of the research that the presence of effective HR practices is associated with a better employee performance in the public sector of AJK as all the dimensions of High-Performance Work Systems have positive associations with employee performance.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Training & Development	1				
2. Performance Appraisal	.52**	1			
3. Employee Participation	.48**	.56**	1		
4. Compensation Practices	.41**	.43**	.45**	1	
5. Employee Performance	.58**	.62**	.55**	.49**	1

Regression Results

Regression analysis reveals that all the High-performance work system (HPWS) factors have significant predictive power within the employee performance in the AJK public sector. The greatest influence is on Training and Development (0.312, $t = 4.78$, $p < 0.001$) and, therefore, continuous learning and skill development is an important factor in enhancing performance.

The positive effect of Performance Appraisal is also substantial ($= 0.274$, $t = 4.12$, $p = 0.001$), which implies that the fair and transparent evaluation positively encourages employees to achieve better outcomes. Employee Participation (0.198, $t = 3.65$, $p = 0.001$) and Compensation Practices (0.166, $t = 2.84$, $p = 0.005$) are also significant in their respective contribution to performance albeit insignificantly.

In general, the findings affirm that successful implementation of HPWS practices has a remarkable positive impact on the performance of employees in the departments of the government.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Employee Performance)

Independent Variables	β (Beta)	t-value	Sig.
Training & Development	0.312	4.78	0.000
Performance Appraisal	0.274	4.12	0.000
Employee Participation	0.198	3.65	0.001
Compensation Practices	0.166	2.84	0.005

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.54$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.52$, $F = 61.23$ ($p < 0.001$)

DISCUSSION

The results of this research affirm that High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) have a substantial role in enhancing performance of employees in the public sector of Azar Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The significant positive correlations between the elements of HPWS especially training, performance appraisal, participation, and compensation and employee performance indicate that the well-designed human resource practices play significant roles in organizational effectiveness.

The findings indicate training and development to be the most powerful forecast of employee performance. This reinforces the idea that the sustained learning and professional growth, as put across by Wright and Boswell (2002) and Huselid (1995), increases the capacity and the confidence as well as the productivity of the employees. In the government sector where the strict frameworks typically suppress innovation,

the training can be used to offer a capacity building mechanism and flexibility to new challenges in the administration.

Similarly, the high influence of performance appraisal suggests that just, open, and uniform evaluation mechanisms support the employee to perform as per the expectations of an organization. This is in line with Combs et al. (2006) who investigated that the merit and feedback-based appraisal processes enhance motivation and accountability. When employees consider appraisals as developmental and objective as opposed to being punitive, chances are high that they will indulge into proactive performance behaviours.

There was also a significant impact of participation on performance by employees highlighting the need to engage employees in decision making. According to Gould-Williams, (2003) participatory management builds trust, claims and commitment in employees and this increases their performance results. This specifically applies to the public sector where bureaucratic structures usually inhibit upward communication. Engagement among the employees and efficiency of service delivery can therefore be enhanced by developing participative channels.

Compensation practices did not have a relatively great impact, but their role cannot be ignored. The findings resonate with such studies as Hassan (2016) and Kim (2010), which found that low pay is a long-term problem with the state organizations. Although financial incentives are limited by the fixed payment schemes, the implementation of non-financial incentives via recognition, progress of the work, and the flexible benefits program can be used to maintain the motivation and satisfaction rates among the employees.

Taken altogether, these results support the resource-based view (Barney, 1991), believing that such successful HR practices generate valuable and inimitable internal resources that contribute to better organizational performance. When the application of HPWS practices is done in a holistic way, then it produces a synergistic impact that increases employee motivation, innovation and productivity (Appelbaum et al., 2000). The results of the current research are consistent with the previous studies that stated that properly designed HR practices positively affect organizational performance and the performance of employees (Huselid, 1995; Appelbaum et al., 2000). It also concurs with the resource based perspective (Barney, 1991) in which human resources are considered resource whose proper management by means of HPWS can be viewed as a resource of a significant source of continuous organizational advantage.

Overall, the discussion reveals that implementation of the concept of HPWS in public institutions is not only possible but also helpful. With the focus on employee development, clear assessment, participative culture, and a reasonable salary, the work of the public organizations in AJK can be improved in terms of operational performance and quality of services. The evidence indicates that strategic HR practices can potentially provide significant gains in resource-related efficiency and employee commitment even in the resource-constrained public settings.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the connection between High-Performance Work System (HPWS) practices and employee performance at the public sector in Azar Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The evaluation, conducted on data provided by employees in four government units namely Administration, Education, Health, and Finance, showed that HPWS practices play a significant role in enhancing the performance of the employees.

Training and development were considered to be one of the most influential factors, which demonstrates the necessity of constant learning and development of skills in the public organizations. The performance appraisal also fundamental role, as it stresses on the significance of the fair and open performance review that inspires employees to work successfully. Moreover, employee involvement and remuneration strategies turned out to have positive influences, which means that decision-making and equitable reward systems participation can lead to an increase in the level of commitment and productivity.

All in all, the research concludes that the application of HPWS in the government sector can lead to better quality of services, operational efficiency, and motivation of the staff. Enhancing these systems can assist the public organizations to eliminate the traditional bureaucratic constraints and streamline the performance of the workforce with the institution objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the study, the following recommendations can be given:

Improve Training Programs:

Public departments should invest in continuous, job-relevant training to build employee competence and adaptability

Enhance Performance Appraisal systems:

It should institutionally adopt transparent, fair, and feedback-based evaluation systems as a way of promoting morale and accountability.

Facilitate Employee Engagement:

Managers are supposed to establish participatory decision making systems to generate trust and sense of ownership to employees.

Refreeze Compensation Structures:

Both financial and non-financial rewards must be to appreciate effort and promote long-term performance.

Make HPWS Policies Institutional:

HPWS practices should be part of the government departmental HR systems to remain consistent, fair, and long-term enhance performance.

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