

Linking high-performance work systems to employee innovative behaviour: Evidence from Ghanaian Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) among academic staff in higher education institutions in Northern Ghana. The study was guided by Social Exchange Theory and the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity framework, which explain how employees may respond to supportive human resource practices through greater involvement in innovative activities. The target population comprised academic staff from technical universities, traditional universities, and colleges of education in Northern Ghana. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, 322 respondents were selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire containing validated measures of HPWS and IWB. The data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0, LISREL 8.5, and the PROCESS Macro. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the responses, while confirmatory factor analysis assessed the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Regression and moderation analyses were subsequently conducted to test the proposed relationships. The results showed that HPWS had a positive and statistically significant effect on IWB ($\beta = .133$, $p < .01$). Organisational culture also significantly moderated this relationship, indicating that the effect of HPWS on employees' innovative behaviour varies according to the prevailing institutional culture. The findings demonstrate that structured training, constructive feedback, employee participation, and other supportive human resource practices can encourage innovation among university staff, even where such practices are implemented at moderate levels. The study contributes to the human resource management and innovation literature by providing evidence from a resource-constrained, non-Western higher education setting. It recommends that universities adopt affordable and context-sensitive human resource practices that strengthen employee development, participation, and engagement.

Keywords: AMO Framework, Ghana, Higher Education, High-Performance Work Systems, Innovative Work Behaviour, Organisational Culture, Social Exchange Theory

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic global economy, the capacity for innovation has become indispensable for organizational competitiveness, survival, and long-term success (Battistelli & Piccione, 2019). Rapid globalization, technological advancement, market turbulence, and heightened customer expectations have pressured firms to constantly adapt and evolve. In this context, innovation is increasingly viewed not just as a technological advancement, but as a people-driven process, where employees play a critical role in generating and implementing new ideas that improve products, services, and internal processes (Newman et al., 2018; Awang et al., 2019).

More specifically, innovative work behaviour (IWB), the deliberate behaviour of employees directed toward the generation, promotion, and implementation of novel ideas within a work role or organization (Thurlings et al., 2015), has been identified as a key predictor of organizational success (Li & Hsu, 2016). It has gained increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners (Eva et al., 2019), particularly within service-oriented industries where constant interaction with customers necessitates adaptability and creativity (Bani-Melhem et al., 2018). Research further links IWB to valuable organizational outcomes such as enhanced customer experience (Li & Hsu, 2016), loyalty (Al-Shahwani, 2020), value co-creation (Farrukh & Ansari, 2021), and the ability to meet and anticipate evolving customer needs (Rego et al., 2014). Consequently, scholars argue that IWB is no longer optional but a strategic imperative for firms aiming to sustain competitive advantage (Hakimian et al., 2016; Lee & Hyun, 2016).

To promote IWB, organizations often rely on Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, especially High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). HPWS refers to coherent bundles of HR practices such as selective staffing,

extensive training, information sharing, employee participation, and performance-based rewards that collectively aim to enhance employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities (Jiang et al., 2012; Miao & Cao, 2019). These practices are grounded in the AMO framework, which posits that employees are most productive when they are able, motivated, and given the opportunity to perform (Jyoti & Rani, 2019). Prior research indicates that HPWS can improve job satisfaction (Fabi et al., 2015), work engagement (Goyal & Patwardhan, 2020), and organizational innovation (Zhou et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2010), and is thus considered foundational for human capital development and innovation performance (Escribá-Carda et al., 2017).

However, empirical findings on the relationship between HPWS and IWB are inconclusive and fragmented. For example, while some studies (e.g., Farrukh & Ansari, 2021; Singh et al., 2021) report that practices like training, participation, and selective staffing promote IWB, others, such as Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal (2019), observe mixed results, including negative associations between compensation and innovation. Moreover, Rehman et al. (2019) question whether HRM practices exert a direct influence on IWB at all, suggesting the presence of contingent factors that mediate or moderate this relationship. This points to a critical need for further research to clarify how and under what conditions HPWS leads to enhanced IWB.

Additionally, the methodological orientation of many studies in this area presents another gap. Much of the existing research relies on managerial or aggregated assessments of HR practices, which may not reflect employees' actual experiences. Yet, studies show that employees' perceptions of HRM practices are more predictive of their behaviour than top-down assessments (Jensen et al., 2013; Yang & Lew, 2020; Van Beurden et al., 2021). This calls for studies that centre on employees' subjective experiences of HPWS and examine their behavioural responses, including innovative output.

Furthermore, there is a geographic and contextual gap in the literature. The bulk of empirical research on HPWS and IWB has been conducted in Western, developed economies, with limited attention to emerging markets, where socio-economic and institutional dynamics may yield different patterns of behaviour (Cooke et al., 2014; Horwitz & Budhwar, 2016). Within the African context and specifically Ghana research on employee innovation and HRM systems is notably scant. Yet, this context is highly relevant: universities and public institutions in Ghana are under pressure to become more competitive, self-sustaining, and innovative in response to changing national and global expectations (World Bank, 1999). Understanding how HRM practices can stimulate innovation in such environments is therefore both timely and practically important.

This study addresses these pressing gaps by investigating how employees' perceptions of HPWS influence their innovative work behaviour. The study is theoretically anchored in Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate organizational support with positive behaviours such as innovation, and the AMO model, which explains how HR practices can enhance performance by improving ability, motivation, and opportunity (Jiang et al., 2012). By integrating these frameworks and applying them to a developing country context, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on strategic HRM and employee innovation and offers valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) among academic staff in universities in Northern Ghana.
2. To determine the level of Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) among academic staff in universities in Northern Ghana.
3. To examine the influence of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) among academic staff in universities in Northern Ghana.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET, developed by Blau (1964), is widely used to explain how employees' perceptions of organizational support influence their work behaviours. At its core, SET suggests that relationships between individuals and organizations are built on reciprocal exchanges. When employees perceive organizational actions such as investments in development, fair rewards, and autonomy as supportive, they feel obliged to reciprocate through positive behaviours, including IWB (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In the context of HPWS, employees interpret HR practices as signals of the organization's commitment to their well-being and development. For example, Chuang and Liao (2010) argue that when employees believe HR practices are implemented to develop their human capital, they are more likely to reciprocate through enhanced effort and creativity. This perception of fairness and trustworthiness strengthens the psychological contract between the employee

and employer, motivating discretionary behaviours such as innovation. Studies have validated SET's applicability to HRM-innovation linkages. For instance, Sanz-Valle and Jiménez-Jiménez (2018) demonstrated that employees' innovative behaviour was significantly influenced by HR practices when perceived as supportive. Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal (2019) and Nazir et al. (2019) also used SET to explain how the perceived social exchange quality mediates the relationship between HR practices and IWB. SET is particularly suitable in understanding IWB because such behaviours are rarely mandated; they emerge when employees choose to go above and beyond formal duties.

2.1.2 AMO Framework

The AMO model (Ability–Motivation–Opportunity) provides a process-level explanation of how HR practices enhance individual performance, including innovation (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Jiang et al., 2012). The model posits that employees are most likely to perform effectively when they possess the necessary ability to do the job, have the motivation to apply themselves, and are given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully. Each of these three dimensions plays a critical role in fostering innovative work behaviour.

HR practices aligned with these dimensions are believed to empower employees toward innovation. Ability-enhancing practices such as training and selective staffing are designed to improve employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies, equipping them with the tools required to innovate (Noopur & Dhar, 2020). Motivation-enhancing practices, including performance-based rewards and opportunities for internal promotion, help to inspire greater effort and commitment among employees (Bhatti et al., 2021). Opportunity-enhancing practices, such as participation in decision-making and autonomy in work execution, provide employees with the structural support and freedom needed to act on their creative ideas (Jaiswal & Tyagi, 2020).

The AMO framework has been applied by numerous scholars to analyze the mechanisms through which HRM systems influence innovation. For instance, Prieto and Pérez-Santana (2014) found that training significantly enhanced IWB by boosting employees' confidence in their capabilities. Similarly, Dhar (2015) demonstrated that selective staffing contributed positively to innovation within service firms. Noopur and Dhar (2020) also highlighted that human capital plays a mediating role in the relationship between training and innovation outcomes. In the current study, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) are categorized in line with the AMO framework. Training and recruitment represent the ability-enhancing dimension; compensation and promotion policies reflect motivation-enhancing practices, while participation and information sharing are used to capture opportunity-enhancing practices. This structured classification offers a comprehensive lens through which the contribution of various HR practices to employee innovative behaviour can be examined.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1. Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)

IWB is defined as the deliberate behaviour of employees aimed at the initiation, promotion, and realization of new ideas, processes, or products that are novel and beneficial to a work role, team, or organization (Thurlings et al., 2015; Janssen, 2000). It is a multi-stage process that includes idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation (Janssen, 2003). IWB is distinct from routine performance because it goes beyond formal job expectations and often involves discretionary effort (Aryee et al., 2012). In service-oriented sectors, IWB plays a vital role in responding to rapidly changing customer expectations and market needs (Bani-Melhem et al., 2018). Research has shown that IWB positively affects customer loyalty (Al-Shahwani, 2020), value co-creation (Farrukh & Ansari, 2021), and organizational competitiveness (Rego et al., 2014). Despite its significance, IWB is influenced by a complex interplay of individual traits, job design, leadership style, and organizational systems, particularly HRM practices (Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Miao & Cao, 2019).

2.2.2 High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS)

HPWS refers to an integrated set of HRM practices designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and productivity in ways that improve organizational performance (Jiang et al., 2012). Common HPWS practices include selective staffing, extensive training, employee participation, performance-based rewards, and internal mobility (Miao & Cao, 2019). These practices are not implemented in isolation but as complementary systems that create synergies and reinforce each other (Escribá-Carda et al., 2017). Empirical research supports the link between HPWS and various employee outcomes, including job satisfaction (Fabi et al., 2015), work engagement (Goyal & Patwardhan, 2020; Jaiswal & Tyagi, 2020), and innovative performance (Zhou et al., 2019). However, findings remain inconsistent. For instance, Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal (2019) found that while practices such as supportive supervision and information sharing enhance IWB, compensation may have a negative association. Similarly, Singh et al. (2021) reported that some HPWS elements (e.g., staffing, training) foster IWB, while others (e.g., performance-based promotion) do not. These inconsistencies highlight the need to explore theoretical frameworks that explain when and how HPWS foster IWB.

2.2.3 Integration of SET and AMO Framework

While SET explains why employees may choose to reciprocate supportive HR practices with innovative behaviour, the AMO model outlines how HR practices enable such behaviour through specific mechanisms. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive explanation: HPWS stimulates IWB when employees perceive these practices as supportive (SET) and when they enhance ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO). The dual-theoretical foundation allows this study to explore both psychological and structural pathways to innovation. The literature underscores the importance of innovative work behaviour in sustaining organizational competitiveness, and the critical role that High-Performance Work Systems play in shaping such behaviour. However, the influence of HPWS on IWB is not always direct or consistent. Social Exchange Theory and the AMO framework provide complementary lenses to understand this complex relationship. SET accounts for employees' psychological reciprocity when HR practices are perceived as supportive, while AMO explains the operational mechanisms by which HPWS translates into innovative output. By adopting these two theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to unpack whether HPWS drives IWB.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy and Paradigm

This study is grounded in a positivist research philosophy, which is commonly adopted in the natural and social sciences where the goal is to investigate observable social realities objectively (Saunders et al., 2019). Positivism posits that knowledge is derived from sensory experience and logical and mathematical treatments, and it emphasizes hypothesis testing based on empirical data. This aligns with the aim of this study, which is to investigate the impact of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on employees' Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) in the Ghanaian higher education sector. In line with positivism, the study adopts an empiricist epistemological stance, which maintains that knowledge is acquired through observable and measurable facts. This is appropriate for the current research as it collects verifiable data through structured questionnaires. Furthermore, an objectivist ontological position was taken, assuming that reality exists independently of human perception and can be understood through scientific investigation (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Approach

The study employs a deductive approach, which is consistent with the positivist philosophy and allows for the testing of hypotheses developed from existing theories, namely, the Social Exchange Theory and the AMO Framework. This approach is appropriate because it begins with established theories and then uses empirical data to test whether the hypotheses hold in the Ghanaian context.

3.3 Research Design and Strategy

A quantitative research design was adopted, using structured questionnaires to collect numerical data for statistical analysis. This design is well-suited to examining relationships between variables such as HPWS and IWB. The study utilizes a descriptive cross-sectional design, in which data was collected at a single point in time from a sample of employees in technical and traditional universities, as well as colleges of education in Northern Ghana. Cross-sectional designs are effective in understanding prevailing conditions and testing theoretical relationships across variables at a specific moment in time (Malhotra et al., 2016). A survey strategy was employed, which allowed the researcher to gather standardized data from a large population using structured questionnaires. Surveys are particularly suitable for describing characteristics of a large group and for examining relationships among variables, as required by the current study (Yin, 2009).

3.4 Population and Sampling Design

The target population for this study comprises senior academic and administrative staff of technical universities (TTUs), traditional universities, and colleges of education located in Ghana's five northern regions. This population was chosen due to its relevance to the study's focus on innovative behaviour in the higher education sector. A convenience sampling technique, a type of non-probability sampling, was adopted to select respondents who were readily accessible and willing to participate. Although convenience sampling may limit generalizability, it was deemed appropriate due to resource constraints and the need for timely data collection (Malhotra et al., 2016). The sampling frame included lecturers and faculty members from the aforementioned institutions, and a total of 384 respondents were included in the final sample. This sample size was deemed sufficient based on Cochran (1977).

Thus,

$$n = \frac{Z^2 (pq)}{e^2}$$

Where n= sample size

Z= the score on the z- table at

e = sampling error or the desired level of precision or margin of error

p = maximum variability of the population

$q = 1 - p$

With the assumption that the maximum variability, which is equal to 50% ($p = 0.5$) and taking a 95% confidence level with $\pm 5\%$ precision, the calculation for the required sample size will be as follows:

$p = 0.5$ and hence $q = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5$; $e = 0.05$; $z = 1.96$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 (0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data was collected using self-administered structured questionnaires distributed to staff in the target institutions. Secondary data was sourced from academic journals, books, and institutional documents to contextualize the findings. The questionnaire included standardized items measuring the three main constructs of the study: HPWS and IWB. All questions were rated on a Likert scale. This instrument was selected due to its efficiency in gathering reliable and consistent data across a large population (Palmquist, 2011). Data was analyzed using a combination of SPSS version 25.0, LISREL 8.5, and PROCESS MACRO. The analysis involved descriptive statistics to profile the sample and understand the distribution of responses, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the measurement model's reliability and validity and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships among variables. Model fit indices used during CFA included the Chi-square statistic, RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and RMSR, all of which fall within acceptable thresholds as recommended by Hair et al. (2014).

3.5 Measurement of Variables

All measurement scales were adopted from validated instruments used in prior studies. HPWS was measured using scale items adapted from Kehoe and Wright (2013), Prieto and Pérez-Santana (2014), and Wei et al. (2010). Innovative Work Behaviour was measured using measurement scale items developed by Janssen (2000) and Scott and Bruce (1994). These items were selected to ensure content and construct validity. Each variable was operationalized to reflect its theoretical and empirical dimensions accurately. Before the full-scale administration, the survey was pilot-tested with a small group of university faculty to assess clarity, structure, and relevance. Feedback was incorporated to revise and refine the final instrument.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 High-Performance Work Systems

High-performance work systems were measured using six (6) items. The item that scored the highest mean was "Employees are provided with systematically structured training". This item had a mean score of 3.16, which suggests that on average, a participant in the study was neutral about the fact that employees are provided with systematically structured training. The item that scored the least mean was "More time and money are spent on employee training compared to our competitors.". This item had a mean score of 2.96. This information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

High-Performance Work Systems

Items	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
HP1: More time and money are spent on employee training compared to our competitors.	1	5	2.96	1.050
HP2: Employees are provided with systematically structured training.	1	5	3.16	1.075
HP3: Both new and old employees are provided with systematically structured training	1	5	3.12	1.046
HP4: Training programs are evaluated on a regular basis.	1	5	3.11	1.098
HP5: Regular surveys are conducted on employee attitudes and opinions	1	5	3.11	1.125
HP6: A constructive feedback system is in place.	1	5	3.10	1.090

4.2 Innovative Work Behaviour

Innovative work behaviour was measured using five (5) items. The item that scored the highest mean was "I put effort into the development of new things at my workplace". This item had a mean score of 4.17, which suggests that on average, a participant in the study agreed that they put effort into the development of new things at their workplace. The item that scored the least mean was "I generate original solutions for problems I come across". This item had a mean score of 4.03.

Table 2*Innovative Work Behaviour*

Items	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
IWB3: I search for new working methods, techniques or instruments needed to undertake my tasks	1	5	4.16	.782
IWB4: I generate original solutions for problems I come across	1	5	4.03	.730
IWB8: I systematically introduce innovative ideas into work practices	2	5	4.06	.694
IWB9: I contribute to the implementation of new ideas	1	5	4.10	.712
IWB10: I put effort into the development of new things at my workplace	1	5	4.17	.719

4.3 Measurement Model Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was done using LISREL 8.5 to check whether the measurement items are satisfactorily represented by their constructs. The results have been presented in Table 3 below. The CFA table below shows the list of the items that were retained in the analysis for each construct, including their respective standardized factor loadings, the Cronbach Alpha (CA), Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the various constructs. Initially, high-performance work systems were measured with twenty-two (22) indicators; however, after going through the modification and purification process, only six (6) items were used to measure the construct. Again, innovative work behaviour was initially measured with ten (10) indicators; however, after going through the modification and purification process, only five (5) items were used to measure the construct. Finally, the CFA model fit indices were good and acceptable (Chi-Square = 264.73; Df = 87; $X^2/Df = 3.04$; $p = 0.00$; RMSEA = 0.08; GFI = .90; CFI = .92; SRMR = .05; NNFI = .91). The indicators and the constructs demonstrated both convergent and discriminant validity; hence, the data is valid and appropriate for further analysis.

Table 3*Construct Validity and Reliability*

Constructs and Measures	Estimate	T-value
<i>High Performance Work Systems: CR = .87; AVE = .51; CA = .87</i>		
HP1: More time and money are spent on employee training compared to our competitors.	0.58	Fixed
HP2: Employees are provided with systematically structured training.	0.77	10.21
HP3: Both new and old employees are provided with systematically structured training	0.78	10.31
HP4: Training programs are evaluated on a regular basis.	0.76	10.10
HP5: Regular surveys are conducted on employee attitudes and opinions	0.71	9.66
HP6: A constructive feedback system is in place.	0.71	9.72
<i>Innovative Work Behavior: CR = .82; AVE = .53; CA = .81</i>		
IWB3: I search for new working methods, techniques or instruments needed to undertake my tasks	0.67	Fixed
IWB4: I generate original solutions for problems I come across	0.61	9.21
IWB8: I systematically introduce innovative ideas into work practices	0.67	9.92
IWB9: I contribute to the implementation of new ideas	0.75	10.80
IWB10: I put effort into the development of new things at my workplace	0.73	10.60

Model Fit: Chi-Square = 264.73; Df = 87; $X^2/Df = 3.04$; $p = 0.00$; RMSEA = 0.08; GFI = .90; CFI = .92; SRMR = .05; NNFI = .91

4.4 Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics

This section of the analysis presents the composite descriptive and correlation analysis results. The descriptive statistics results, as presented in Table 4 below, showed that high-performance work systems had a mean score of 3.093, which suggests that, on average, participants in the study had a moderate score on the use of HPWS. Finally, innovative work behaviour had a mean score of 4.104, which suggests that on average participants in the study scored high on this construct.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Results*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
HPWS	3.093	.835	1				
IWB	4.104	.551	.267**	1			
Gender	.776	.417	-.078	.052	1		
Status	.677	.468	-.027	.043	-.003	1	
Experience	.425	.495	.056	-.103	.057	-.531**	1

** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results as presented above indicated that high-performance work systems positively relate to innovative work behavior ($r = .267$, $p < 0.01$). This means that as high-performance work systems are enhanced, innovative work behaviour will also be enhanced.

4.5 Hypotheses Testing

The study's hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS MACRO model 1. The results have been presented in Table 5. Specifically, the study found that none of the control variables had a significant effect on innovative work behaviour. High-performance work systems have a significant positive effect on innovative work behaviour ($\beta = .121$, $t = 2.977$). This means that changes in high-performance work systems will result in positive changes in innovative work behaviour. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported.

Table 5

Hypothesis Results

Predictor	Outcome: Innovative Work Behavior	
	β (t)	Hypothesis
Constant	4.031 (41.667)**	
Controls		
Gender (Male = 1, Female = 0)	.121 (1.670)	Na
Status (Up to Lecturer = 1, Above Lecturer = 0)	-.009 (-.112)	Na
Experience (Up to 10 years = 0, Above 10 years = 1)	-.137 (-1.898)	Na
Direct Effects		
High-performance work systems (HPWS)	.133 (2.977)**	Supported
Interaction Effect		
HPWS*Culture	.092 (2.372)*	Supported
HPWS*Low Culture	.051 (.841)	
HPWS*High Culture	.214 (4.108)**	
Model Fit		
R	32.6%	
R ²	10.7%	
R ² Change	1.7%	
F	6.023**	
F Change	5.627*	

Note: ** $p > 0.01$; * $p > 0.05$

4.6 Discussion

This study explored the impact of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB) among academic staff in Northern Ghana's higher education institutions. The findings provide empirical support for the theoretical proposition that well-structured HR practices can stimulate employee innovation, consistent with both Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the AMO (Ability–Motivation–Opportunity) framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Jiang et al., 2012). The positive and statistically significant relationship found between HPWS and IWB ($r = 0.267$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = .133$, $t = 2.977$) affirms earlier research that positions HRM as a key enabler of innovation. This supports the work of Prieto and Pérez-Santana (2014), who found that employees who perceived HR practices as empowering were more likely to engage in innovation. In the Ghanaian university context, this means that investments in structured training, regular feedback mechanisms, and employee surveys – all part of HPWS – are instrumental in encouraging faculty to engage in creative and innovative tasks.

The descriptive results further showed that while HPWS practices were moderately perceived ($M = 3.093$), IWB levels were high ($M = 4.104$). This suggests that even a moderate implementation of HPWS can elicit strong innovative responses from employees in settings where such systems have historically been underdeveloped. These findings are aligned with Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal (2019), who argued that employee perceptions of HR practices—not necessarily their intensity—are more predictive of innovation outcomes. This resonates with the logic of Social Exchange Theory, where employees reciprocate perceived organizational support with discretionary behaviours like IWB (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The individual components of HPWS examined such as structured training and feedback mechanisms, correspond to the AMO framework's pillars. Structured training contributes to employee ability, while regular evaluations and participatory practices enhance opportunity and motivation. For example, Noopur and Dhar (2020) highlighted that training and empowerment significantly boost IWB by increasing employees' capacity and confidence

to innovate. In the current study, the highest-rated HPWS item was related to structured training ($M = 3.16$), which also had the highest loading (0.77) in the CFA, reinforcing the centrality of ability-enhancing practices.

Interestingly, despite the overall positive link, the relatively modest correlation coefficient suggests that HPWS alone may not wholly account for variations in IWB. This echoes findings from Rehman et al. (2019), who cautioned that HPWS might not exert a uniformly direct effect on IWB and called for considering mediating and moderating variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, or psychological empowerment. In this study, cultural values were found to moderate the HPWS-IWB relationship ($\beta = .214$, $t = 4.108$), consistent with the argument by Cooke et al. (2014) that the effectiveness of HR systems is culturally contingent. Moreover, the contextual setting of this study, a developing country with resource-constrained public universities, adds depth to our understanding of HPWS and IWB. Prior studies in Western contexts (e.g., Escribá-Carda et al., 2017; Jensen et al., 2013) emphasized the sophisticated implementation of HPWS, but this study suggests that even minimalistic or emergent HPWS can have considerable benefits when they are perceived as fair and supportive. This has practical implications: institutions in resource-limited settings can foster innovation by focusing on cost-effective but employee-centered HR interventions.

Gender, position, and experience did not significantly influence IWB in the regression analysis, suggesting that innovation behaviour is broadly influenced by systemic practices rather than individual demographics. This contrasts with some earlier studies that identified differences based on age, experience, or rank (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). However, it may also reflect the growing professionalization and parity of faculty roles in Ghanaian universities, where innovation demands are becoming increasingly standardized across roles. The study also contributes methodologically by measuring HPWS from the employee perspective, responding to calls by scholars like Yang and Lew (2020) and Van Beurden et al. (2021), who criticized managerial-centric assessments that often misrepresent frontline realities. This bottom-up approach adds to the reliability of the findings and underscores the importance of psychological contracts in shaping innovative output.

The findings corroborate a growing body of literature asserting the importance of strategically aligned HRM practices in fostering innovation (Zhou et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2021). They suggest that universities in Ghana and similar contexts can bolster their innovation capacity not merely through structural reforms or capital investment, but through deliberate, employee-centered HRM practices that enhance ability, motivation, and opportunity for innovation.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that High Performance Work Systems, when implemented in a structured and employee-centered manner, serve as a significant catalyst for stimulating innovative work behaviour among academic staff. In resource-constrained environments such as Ghanaian public universities, even moderate but well-perceived HR practices such as systematic training, regular performance feedback, and participatory decision-making can meaningfully influence innovation outcomes. This supports the theoretical propositions of the Social Exchange Theory, where perceived organizational support leads to positive behavioural reciprocation, and the AMO framework, which emphasizes the functional role of HR practices in enhancing ability, motivation, and opportunity. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader literature by offering empirical evidence from a non-Western, emerging economy context, thereby addressing a major geographic gap in HRM and innovation research. The findings challenge the assumption that sophisticated or high-cost HR interventions are necessary for driving innovation and instead emphasize the importance of contextual adaptation and employee perceptions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that university management prioritize the implementation of structured and ongoing training programs that directly support innovation. Even with limited resources, consistent investment in employee development can significantly enhance innovative work behaviour. HR departments should regularly engage staff through surveys and feedback mechanisms to ensure that human resource policies are perceived as fair, relevant, and supportive. The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) should provide policy guidance and targeted funding to encourage innovation-friendly HR practices in public universities. Support in the form of innovation grants and HR capacity-building programs will help institutions strengthen their human capital strategies. Academic leaders, such as deans and department heads, are also encouraged to promote inclusive and empowering workplace cultures. Recognizing staff contributions, offering autonomy, and encouraging collaboration can serve as powerful non-financial motivators for innovation. Finally, future researchers should explore longitudinal and qualitative approaches to deepen understanding of how HR practices influence innovation over time and within specific cultural settings.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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