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Perceived support from the organization as a mediating variable between high performance work systems and creativity of employees

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, there has been an abundance of research dedicated to investigating the organisational results of high-performance work systems (HPWSs). But few studies were conducted on the individual results of HPWSs, particularly employee creativity and also the mechanism by which employee creativity is influenced by HPWSs. Drawing on the theory of social exchange, this study is aimed at filling this gap by examining the mediating impact of perceived support from the organisation on the association between HPWSs and creativity of employees. A cross-sectional approach along with a quantitative-deductive causal method was adopted, and Bangladeshi Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector was the focus in this study. We collected data utilising self-administered questionnaires from 211 full-time employees and applied partial least square-structural equation modelling for our statistical analysis. Our research findings emphasise that HPWSs positively affects perceived support from the organisation, subsequently enhancing creativity of employees. Furthermore, the outcomes also suggest that perceived support from the organisation acts as a mediator in the connection between HPWSs and the creativity of employees. Our study makes a significant contribution to the SME literature on what ways SMEs might enhance employee creativity. Moreover, the findings relating to this research have also implications for managers as well as practitioners. It is crucial for SMEs to implement HPWS that in turn encourage employee creativity. In order to stimulate employee creativity, SME businesses should adopt HPWS that foster employees' perceptions of organisational support. Once the implementation of HPWS is done, it becomes essential for SME employees to be motivated and perceive strong support from their employer, which, in turn, leads to increased creative behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

Individual and organisational results of HPWSs or high-performance work systems, namely voluntary turnover (Selden, Schimmoeller, & Thompson, 2013), discretionary behaviour (Elorza, Harris, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2016), job performance (Shih, Chiang, & Hsu, 2013), and firm performance (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010), have gotten a lot of attention in the last decades. However, there has been limited research conducted regarding the impact of HPWS on the creativity of individuals (Chiang, Hsu, & Shih, 2015). Despite the fact that creativity of employees leads significantly to competitive advantage and innovation of the organisation, this is the case (Amabile, 1988). Given that long-term organisational success is dependent on highly dedicated and skilled workforce and organisational innovation, this is a significant research gap (Ehnert, Parsa, Roper, Wagner, & Muller-Camen, 2016; Pfeffer, 2010; Sparrow, Shipton, Budhwar, & Brown, 2016).

The emphasis on why and how HPWS affects employee behaviour and attitudes, rather than just reporting this direct connection, is another advancement in the area of HPWS-performance research (Shen, Benson, & Huang, 2014). Referring to the social-exchange theory, HRM activities that are perceived by organisational staff as a manifestation of a company's dedication to its workforce are likely to be reciprocated with favourable behaviours, as highlighted by Zacharatos, Barling, and Iverson (2005). Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of research addressing the pathways by which HRM practices impact employee conduct and attitudes, particularly within the context of Bangladesh. Thus, we are exploring whether the mediation of perceived support from the organisation exists in the link between HPWS and creativity of employees.

Furthermore, based on interactionist viewpoint (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990), employee creativity may also be affected by interactions among different elements, such as contextual (e.g. management approach) and social components (e.g. socio-emotional resource). As a result, it can be expected that creativity of employees is influenced by perceived support from the organisation. Employees who feel they receive significant organisational support are inclined to respond with increased creativity.

In three ways, the research gaps are filled by our study and thus make contributions to existing literature on HPWS-performance relationships. First, we see HPWS as a significant predictor of the creativity of employees. Although HPWS are known for their capacity to enhance organisational efficiency, there has been limited research exploring their influence on creativity of employees. Second, this research enhances our understanding regarding the impact of employees' perceived support from the organisation on their creativity. Next, we are delving into the role of perceived organisational support as a mediator in the connection between HPWS and creativity of employees, paving a fresh way by which HPWS can stimulate employees' creative behaviour (Chiang et al., 2015). This contributes to the expanding body of empirical evidence rooted in the theory of social-exchange. The conceptual model summary for this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

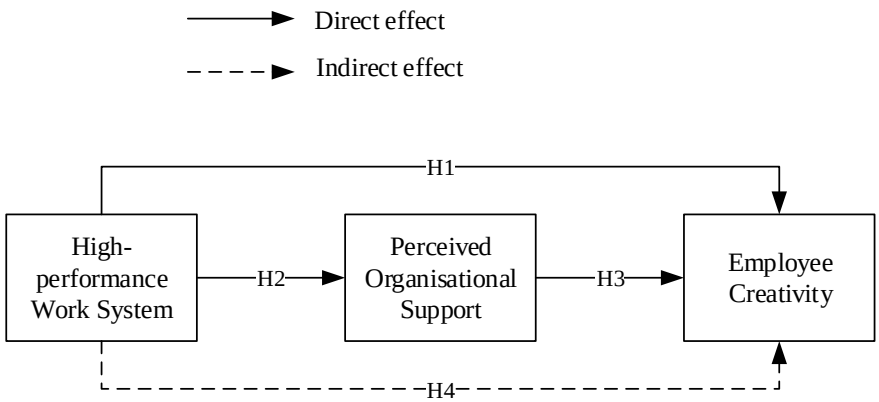

Fig. 1. The conceptual Model

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of our research encompass the following:

1. To examine the association between HPWS and perceived support from the organisation.
2. To explore the connection between perceived support from the organisation and creativity of employees.
3. To analyse the association between HPWS and creativity of employees.
4. To investigate how the perceived support from the organisation mediates the connection between HPWS and the creativity of employees.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

HPWS and Creativity of Employees

HPWS or high-performance work systems encompass several human resource activities that accelerate employees' involvement, skills and motivation in order for enabling a company to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Fareed, Noor, Isa, & Salleh, 2016; Guthrie, Flood, Liu, & MacCurtain, 2009). Moreover, HPWS inspires employees to generate innovative concepts and influence them to share information (Chiang et al., 2015). According to previous research, companies that enact HPWS have more likelihood to evaluate the participation of employees in making decisions, make an investment in their workforce, and fulfil staffs' needs for development and promotion (Tang, Yu, Cooke, & Chen, 2017). As a result, it can be argued that HPWS implementation is essential for nurturing creativity of employees.

Employee creativity indicates their ability to generate beneficial as well as innovative ideas. It is thought to significantly influence innovation of the firm (Jiang, Wang, & Zhao, 2012) and business performance (Gong, Zhou, & Chang, 2013). It is our expectation that employees' behaviour and attitudes will be shaped by managerial procedures, given their exposure to a number of managerial functions, as highlighted by Chiang et al. (2015). Consequently, it is crucial for organisations to explore the extent to which management policies, namely HRM systems, influence the creativity of employees. Since HRM systems contribute to increased firm performance, HPWS have been observed fostering innovation and generating creative thoughts (Messersmith & Guthrie, 2010). Accordingly, it is our anticipation that implementing HPWS will influence employee creativity positively. Consequently, we are proposing the following hypothesis:

H1: HPWS positively influences the creativity of employees.

HPWS and Perceived Support from the Organization

The way employees view their company's acknowledgment of their contributions and consideration for their well-being is termed as perceived organisational support (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). It symbolises how organisations as well as employees interact with each other. In accordance with Eisenberger et al. (1986), employees' perceived support from the organisation are influenced by the company's willingness to recognize and reward employees' efforts on the job, as well as to fulfil their demand for approval and praise. When HRM methods emphasise investment in employees, availability of growth opportunities, and participative decision making, employees perceive support from their organisation and view their role as a part of social exchange (Paauwe et al., 2013). Consequently, organisational members in thriving high-performance work systems tend to consider their employers as supportive, enabling them to demonstrate innovation and creative behaviour.

Moreover, some HPWS components are likely to impact perceived support from the organisation positively. Employment security, for example, helps employees believe that their employers focus on their development by having a long-term view of employees' careers and spending considerable time as well as resources (Zacharatos et al., 2005), improving employees' views of organisational support. Extensive training is an

investment in developing personnel, which leads to strong employees' views of organisational support (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Information sharing promotes mutual trust and support (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1994). Employees believe that organisations evaluate their contribution (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994) when they share their viewpoints on rewards, perceived fairness, and performance (Aggarwal, Datta, & Bhargava, 2007). Employees also feel valued when they do high-quality work (Pfeffer & Jeffrey, 1998), which comprises a crucial factor of HPWS (Tang et al., 2017). Therefore, it is our expectation that HPWS implementation influence perceived organisational support, as in the following way:

H2: HPWS positively influences the perceived support from the organisation.

Perceived Support from the Organization and Creativity of Employees

Referring to the social-exchange theory, individuals obtaining emotional as well as social advantages from their employers tend to reciprocate by displaying favourable behaviours and attitudes, as suggested by studies conducted by Maden (2015). Perceived organisational support is provided by the organisation which is considered as a socio-emotional resource (Wong, Wong, & Ngo, 2012) and believed to be connected with positive behaviour and attitudes, for instance creativity of employees. According to the findings of previous research, organisational members who hold belief that their firms provide them significant support have more tendency to be engaged in creative functions and produce creative ideas (Yu & Frenkel, 2013).

Organisational staffs have more likelihood to demonstrate trust and confidence, when they find their organisations to be very supportive (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010), which fosters their willingness to generate creative suggestions and ideas. Employees obtaining considerable organizational support have more likelihood to be in a good mood (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001), that results in facilitating creative ideas (Judge & Ilies, 2004). Additionally, employees tend to engage in conversations and interactions with others (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004), which in turn help them to acquire more knowledge and information along with creating more innovative thoughts (Jiang et al., 2012). Employees are highly enthusiastic in promoting creative ideas (Chang et al., 2014) because they have positive work engagement. The following hypothesis is suggested, based on the fact that staffs experiencing organisational support tend to propose creative ideas:

H3: Perceived support from the organisation positively influences the creativity of employees.

Perceived Support from the Organization as Mediator

To sum-up, implementing HPWS in a company can improve individuals' perceptions regarding organisational support that can lead an employee to promote their creative ideas. In accordance with social exchange theory, organisational staffs perceive HPWS as signs of organisational support, which consequently reciprocate by involving in various creative functions. The above-mentioned arguments help us to suggest the hypothesis below:

H4: The impact of HPWS on enhancing creativity of employees is mediated by perceived support from the organisation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The appropriate technique for analysis is determined by the type of problem. The current survey employs a quantitative research methodology. Nonetheless, we adopted a cross-sectional approach because of the nature of this research. We conducted a research study to gather data from employees working in Bangladeshi Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

This study is undertaken for examining the association between HPWS, perceived support from the organisation, and the creativity of employees. The application of survey instruments depends on the specific characteristics of the research. In consequence, we developed and distributed self-administered questionnaires through email among our respondents and applied a specific application namely Google forms. Recently, a significant number of researchers urged using cloud technology in order to collect data because it is effective and also convenient (Denton, 2012). Lewis (2015) expressed the opinion that utilising sophisticated technology like smart devices and the internet are preferable for gathering respondents' data. Thus, the researcher will employ Google forms considering the convenient usage, ease of interaction with participants, and efficient management of time. In the Google form, necessary explanations and instructions regarding every section of the questionnaire are properly provided. We gathered data for our research employing the five-point Likert scale.

The measures of study construct were adapted based on the previous research. We measured the HPWS, encompassing elements such as employee engagement, family-friendly work practices, job security, information sharing, training, and performance management. We followed the work of Searle et al. (2011) for adapting nine items to measure HPWS. Some of the example items in the survey included "Employees receive sufficient training to ensure their competency in their respective roles." This measure's Cronbach's alpha stood at 0.81, signifying a satisfactory position of measurement reliability. Additionally, to assess perceived support from the organisation, the work of Eisenberger et al. (1986) deemed appropriate for the context of Bangladeshi employees for selecting four specific items. The measure demonstrated Cronbach's coefficient of 0.86, with an example item being "our company prioritises the health and safety of its employees." Lastly, we employed a scale consisting of 13 items, designed by Zhou and George (2001), to evaluate the creativity of the employees. "I provide fresh means to attain objectives or goals" was the sample item of this measure. This measure had a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.83.

We applied a pick-and-drop method in this research, and also utilised the technique of simple random sampling to distribute questionnaires. Our study also chose the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) for determining the sample size. Following this sample size table, our research's sample size was chosen to be two hundred eleven (211). Table 1 displays the rate of response. In addition, each participant of our research provided his or her demographic details namely education, age, gender, and monthly income. Table 2 provides the demographic details of the survey participants.

Table 1. Rate of Response

Response	Frequency	Response	Frequency
Number of questionnaires distributed	310	Number of excluded questionnaires	18
Number of questionnaires returned	240	Response rate before entering data	77.41%
Number of Useable questionnaires	211	Response rate after entering data	68.06%

Table 2. The Sample's Demographic Profile

Demographic Data	Frequency (N= 211)	Percentage
	Gender	
Male	156	74
Female	55	26
	Age	
31 - 35 years	76	36

36 - 40 years	93	44
41 - 45 years	27	13
45 years above	15	7
	Education	
Less than High School	8	4
High School	44	21
Undergraduate Degree	72	34
Postgraduate Degree	87	41
	Income	
Tk 20000 - Tk 30000	72	34
Tk 30001 - Tk 50000	110	52
Above Tk 50000	29	14

Considerations of Ethics

Research projects require ethical considerations since all respondents have legal and moral rights. Greetham (2009) points out several key characteristics. A number of ethical considerations this study insured for the participants are mentioned here. Researchers engaged in no acts of bad faith, misconduct, or fraud during research. Others were acknowledged for their contributions as well. The scientists took proactive initiatives to protect the participants from deception, harm, coercion, and privacy intrusion, although it meant withholding participants' names or characteristics to maintain the research's integrity. The questionnaire did not incorporate participants' names, and their identities were not mentioned at any point during the reporting and analysis process. Also, we did not disclose the name of their affiliated organisation. The researchers ensured transparency with the participants, providing true information regarding the study's objectives, procedures, methodology, and results. The researchers refrained from misrepresenting or concealing the nature of the study under any circumstances. The researchers are intended to disseminate the research results for evaluation and scrutiny through the peer review process. Respondents were granted informed consent verbally following a thorough explanation of the study objectives. After addressing any inquiries and providing details, the researchers sought approval from the respondents to be engaged in the research. Respondents were made aware of their right of withdrawing from the study anytime or at any point of their choosing. The participants were guaranteed that their decision of withdrawal from the research would result in no prejudice or bias in any form.

Analysis of Data

Our hypothesised framework was estimated applying the PLS-SEM approach and based on the suggestions of Ringle, Wende and Becker (2015), the statistical program called SmartPLS 3 was utilised. In our research, PLS or Partial Least Square technique seems the most appropriate choice because of its capability to carry out causal predictive analysis in scenarios characterised by limited theoretical knowledge and high complexity, as highlighted by Fornell et al. (1990). Along the lines, PLS proves to be suitable for analysing data in the early stages of theory development, in particular, when variable measurements and theoretical models are still in the consolidation process. Moreover, when Partial Least Squares are compared with conventional covariance-based structural equation modelling, PLS proves particularly useful in study settings where the observations' number falls below 250, as contended by Reinartz et al. (2009). Additionally, Chin (1998) maintained that PLS is notably appropriate for study because of its ability to examine mediating effects. Given the necessity of estimating interaction effects rooted in mediation for the results reported in this research, the selected method can be deemed highly appropriate. The nature of all variables of current research was First order and Reflective constructs. Regarding data analysis, PLS-SEM employs a sequential process of two-step, beginning with developing a measurement model as well as culminating in establishing a structural model, as delineated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First and foremost, our focus centered on assessing the measurement model through examining internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity (DV), and convergent validity (CV), as advocated by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) and Chin (1998). Along the lines, Hair et al. (2006) expounded that measurement of internal consistency reliability entails the investigation of composite reliability (CR) scores, acting as an indicator of the extent to which the underlying variable is duly captured by the constituent items. In assessing the measurement model, another key criterion to consider includes Average Variance Extracted or AVE. A commonly accepted standard in AVE evaluation is a threshold of 0.5 or higher, implying an acceptable measurement validity level.

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Latent constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
High-performance Work Systems	HPWS-1	0.855	0.621	0.958
	HPWS-2	0.818		
	HPWS-3	0.861		
	HPWS-4	0.846		
	HPWS-5	0.850		
	HPWS-6	0.835		
	HPWS-7	0.860		
	HPWS-8	0.859		
	HPWS-9	0.844		
Perceived Support from the Organization	PSO-1	0.866	0.710	0.940
	PSO-2	0.874		
	PSO-3	0.792		
	PSO-4	0.873		
Creativity of Employees	CE-1	0.811	0.605	0.961
	CE-2	0.766		
	CE-3	0.725		
	CE-4	0.789		
	CE-5	0.814		
	CE-6	0.805		
	CE-7	0.808		
	CE-8	0.789		
	CE-9	0.737		
	CE-10	0.751		
	CE-11	0.806		
	CE-12	0.815		
	CE-13	0.779		

Source: Output of the analysis.
Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted

Once the convergent validity was confirmed, this study applied the methodology advocated by Fornell and Larcker (1981) to explore the discriminant validity. Discriminant validity, in the context of measurement, denotes the degree to which a construct's items can effectively differentiate among constructs and correctly evaluate distinct concepts. In determining discriminant validity, one criterion includes comparing the Average Variance Extracted with squared correlations or the square root of the Average Variance Extracted in conjunction with correlations. As illustrated in Table 4, we employed the second method, involving the comparison of the square root of the Average Variance Extracted with the correlations. One can reach the conclusion that the measures demonstrate discriminant validity when observing that the square root of the AVE, as indicated in the diagonal elements, exceeds all other coefficients within the respective rows and columns associated with that specific construct. The data presented in

Table 3 highlights that the diagonal elements display values greater than those found within their corresponding rows and columns, thus pointing out not only the distinctiveness of the measures in this research but also possessing appropriate discriminant validity.

Tables 3 and 4 reveal that all of the needed values were met, indicating that our measurement model is ready to be processed further.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity of the Constructs

	1	2	3
1. High-performance Work Systems	0.788		
2. Perceived Support from the Organization	0.339	0.838	
3. Creativity of Employees	0.213	0.305	0.778

Source: Output of the analysis.

Note: The diagonals of the matrix denote the square root of the AVE, whereas the remaining elements signify the coefficients of correlation.

Assessment of Structural Model

This study applied a structural model for investigating the causal association among high-performance work systems, individuals' perceptions regarding organisational support, and creativity of employees. The current research utilised beta values or path coefficients and R^2 values or coefficient of determination to assess the degree to which our gathered data substantiated the proposed connections, as outlined in the study by Hair et al. (2014). To validate the statistical significance of our findings, a bootstrapping method involving 5,000 iterations was applied. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) and Hair et al. (2014) were in consensus that the bootstrapping method is employed to derive standard errors and t-values. R^2 signifies the proportion of variability in the outcome variables accounted for by the explanatory variables within the framework, as discussed by Hair et al. (2010). Furthermore, it serves as an evaluation of the model's predictive accuracy, as explained in the study by Ang, Ramayah, and Amin (2015). Likewise, Hair et al. (2006) conceded that path coefficients demonstrate how much the outcome variable changes as a result of each explanatory construct. R Square (R^2) explains the variance which has the value 0.364. This suggests that a significant portion, exactly 36.4 percent, of the variation in creativity of employees can be attributed to the presence of HPWS and perceived support from the organisation.

Table 5 exhibits the outcomes of hypothesis testing carried out through bootstrapping procedures. H1 and H3 were supported; however, H2 was not supported as the beta and t value showed insignificant results.

Table 5. Results of the Partial Least Squares Path Analysis

Relationships	Standard Beta	Standard Error	t-value	Decision
HPWS→CE	0.207	0.048	4.23**	Supported
HPWS→PSO	0.180	0.051	3.76**	Supported
PSO→CE	0.326	0.042	6.43**	Supported
HPWS→PSO→CE	0.169	0.026	3.265**	Supported

Source: Output of the analysis.

Note: * $p < 0.05$ level; ** $p < 0.01$ level (two tailed). (PSO- Perceived Support from the Organization, CE- Creativity of Employees, HPWS- High-performance Work Systems)

Contributions to Knowledge

The current research significantly contributes to the current body of knowledge in several aspects. Initially, it increases the existing knowledge base of staff creativity by noting that the adoption of HPWS stimulates and fosters creativity among employees. To the best of our understanding, little prior research has investigated how

HRM practices are linked to the creativity of employees (Chiang et al., 2015). On the contrary, limited studies have been carried out in the HRM domain emphasising the connection between HPWS and improved organisational performance (Jiang et al., 2012). Even though Chiang et al. (2015) claimed that HPWS encourages employees to exchange information, which drives them to be more creative, they did not examine the direct influence of HPWS on staff creativity. Thus, our research extends the understanding that creativity of employees is positively influenced by implementing HPWS.

Afterwards, our research demonstrated that employees' perceptions of the firm's support played a mediating role in the association between HPWS and their creative behaviour. Prior research like Shen et al.'s (2014) work highlights the significance of investigating the ways by which HRM policies impact employee attitudes and behaviour the behaviour and attitudes of employees. We proposed and tested a hypothesis regarding the mediating influence of employees' perceptions of firm's support in the association between HPWS and creativity of employees. This research direction was motivated in part by past scholars' urging to fill gaps within the academic literature. Previous studies like Chiang et al. (2015) on HPWS-employee creativity association have been expanded by our findings. Furthermore, our research offers additional empirical proof supporting social-exchange theory. It indicates that individuals perceive HPWS as a manifestation of organisational support, leading them to be engaged in creative behaviour.

Practical Implications

These findings relating to this research have also implications for managers as well as practitioners. Initially, our research reveals that implementing an HPWS can help employees come up with useful and novel ideas. As a result, it is crucial for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to implement HPWS that in turn encourage employee creativity. For instance, firms may undertake extensive training for employees which will not merely help them gain proper skills and knowledge needed for creativity, but also produce more inventive thoughts. Additionally, it is essential for the employer overseeing the enterprise, including the CEO, to rationally implement HR practices. In practical terms, such HR practices should be applied extensively to fulfil the employee requirements, thereby strengthening their creative capabilities.

Secondly, it is reported in our findings that perceived support from the organisation plays a mediating role in the association between HPWS and individuals' creative behaviour. This result suggests that HPWS improves employees' perceived support from the organisation, which leads to enhancing creativity of employees. Therefore, it is necessary for organisations to focus on providing adequate support to their employees. This is inevitable as the perceptions of employees regarding organisational support not merely serve as a crucial motivator for enhancing creativity but also represent a vital variable for HR systems aiming at improving employees' creative abilities. It can be seen that business leaders should focus on the improvement of HPWS procedures and formulate policies which are effective for enhancing employee creativity. Once the implementation of HPWS is done, it is imperative to foster a sense of motivation and support among employees of SMEs, encouraging them to engage in creative behaviours.

Limitations of the Research

A number of potential drawbacks exist within the scope of this research. First and foremost, the positive influence of HPWS on creativity of employees is reported in our study findings. Despite the fact that HPWS includes a collection of HRM practices, HRM content constitutes the focal point of our study. HRM processes in comparison with HRM content, pose greater complexity in terms of copying, and thus are more inclined to confer a sustained competitive advantage over the long term. HRM researchers like Hauff et al. (2017) have been shedding light on HRM processes for the past few decades. However, future researchers might come forward to gain in-depth comprehension regarding the influence of HRM processes on the employees' creative behaviour.

Next, according to the study findings, perceived support from the organisation only acts as a partial mediator in the link between HPWS and creativity of individuals. Such association is also intervened by a number of other factors. A past study, for example, found that HPWS contributes to foster information exchange, which in turn promotes creativity of employees (Chiang et al., 2015). Other mediating mechanisms may be examined further to provide a comprehensive and better picture of the aforesaid association. As a result, further research might be conducted investigating other variables by which HPWS influences employee creativity.

Finally, because we conducted our study in certain regions in Bangladesh where Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) businesses flourish, our findings are limited in terms of the generalizability. To enhance the generalizability of our results, it is inevitable to attempt replicating our findings in diverse contexts, both beyond and within Bangladesh. Last but not the least, in terms of methodology, future research can control or take into account other types of supervisor or employee personalities when exploring mechanisms or factors that promote creativity of staff.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to the realm of Human Resource Management by exploring the connection between HPWS and employees' creativity within the specific area of Small and Medium Enterprises operating in Bangladesh. According to our study findings, HPWS improves individuals' perception of organisational support that results in fostering creativity of employees. In other words, HPWS influences the creativity of employees and employees' perceived support from the organisation acts as mediator.

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