

Enhancing Employee Innovative Behaviours Through Human Resource Wellbeing Practices

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Abstract : The present study explores the links between supporting employee well-being and the potential benefits to employee performance. We focus on employee innovative work behaviors (IWBs), which have three stages: (1) development, (2) adoption, and (3) implementation of new ideas and work methods. We explore the role of organizational support focusing on employee well-being via High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). HPWS are HR practices that are designed to enhance employees' skills, commitment, and ultimately, productivity. HPWS influence employee performance through building their skills, knowledge, and abilities and there is meta-analytic support for firm-level HPWS influencing firm performance, but less attention towards employee outcomes, especially innovation. We explore HPWS-wellbeing being offered (e.g., EAPs, well-being App, etc.) to capture organizational commitment to employee well-being. Under social exchange theory, workers should reciprocate their firm's offering of HPWS-wellbeing with greater efforts towards IWBs. Further, we explore playful work design as a mediator, which represents employees proactively creating work conditions that foster enjoyment/challenge but don't require any design change to the job itself. We suggest HPWS-wellbeing can encourage employees to become more playful, and ultimately more innovative. Finally, beyond direct effects, we examine whether these relations are similar by gender and ultimately test a moderated mediation model. Using N=1135 New Zealand employees, we established measures with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and all measures had good psychometric properties ($\alpha > .80$). We controlled for age, tenure, education, and hours worked and analyzed data using the PROCESS macro (version 4.2) specifically model 8 (moderated mediation). We analyzed overall IWB, and then again across the three stages. Overall, we find HPWS-wellbeing is significantly related to overall IWBs and the three stages (development, adoption, and implementation) individually. Similarly, HPWS-wellbeing shapes playful work design and playful work design predicts overall IWBs and the three stages individually. It only partially mediates the effects of HPWS-wellbeing, which retains a significant indirect effect. Moderation effects are supported, with males reporting a more significant effect from HPWS-wellbeing on playful work design but not IWB (or any of the three stages) than females. Females report higher playful work design when HPWS-wellbeing is low, but the effects are reversed when HPWS-wellbeing is high (males higher). Thus, males respond stronger under social exchange theory from HPWS-wellbeing, at least towards expressing playful work design. Finally, evidence of moderated mediation effects is found on overall IWBs and the three stages. Males report a significant indirect effect from HPWS-wellbeing on IWB (through playful work design), while female employees report no significant indirect effect. The benefits of playful work design fully account for their IWBs. The models account for small amounts of variance towards playful work design (12%) but larger for IWBs (26%). The study highlights a gap in the literature on HPWS-wellbeing and provides empirical evidence of their importance towards worker innovation. Further, gendered effects suggest these benefits might not be equal. The findings provide useful insights for organizations around how providing HR practices that support employee well-being are important, although how they work for different genders needs further exploration.

Keywords : human resource practices, wellbeing, innovation, playful work design

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