

RESEARCH REPORT

Line Manager Implementation Perceptions as a Mediator of Relations Between High-Performance Work Practices and Employee Outcomes

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Strategic human resources management (SHRM) scholars recently have suggested that high-performance work practices (HPWP) implementation might serve as a critical mediator between HPWP and workplace outcomes. This study proposes and tests a model that positions line managers' perceptions regarding the extent to which they implement their organization's HPWP as a mediator of relations between HPWP and employee attitudes (i.e., turnover intentions and participative decision-making perceptions) and behavior (i.e., job performance). Using data from 507 line managers and 109 matched line manager–subordinate response sets, the results suggest that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions fully mediate relations between HPWP and employee outcomes. The authors also found that line managers' human resources competency and political skill affect their HPWP implementation perceptions. Overall, these findings contribute to a more informed understanding of relationships between HPWP and work outcomes and suggest that additional SHRM research is needed to better understand whether and how HPWP are implemented.

Keywords: high-performance work practices, HR practice implementation, strategic HR management, social context theory, strong situations/climates

Recently, scholars have suggested that the implementation of high-performance work practices (HPWP; e.g., valid selection procedures, job-focused training, performance-based incentives and compensation, etc.) may serve a critical mediating role between HPWP and organizational outcomes, such as productivity, turnover, sales growth, and profitability (e.g., Becker & Huselid, 2006; Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2009). For example, Van Iddekinge et al. called for a model of HPWP implementation to guide future research, emphasizing line managers' (i.e., managers directly responsible for producing the firm's products or services and implementing HPWP) ability and willingness to implement their organization's HPWP. Furthermore, Nishii and Wright suggested that employee HPWP perceptions (and subsequent behaviors) result from

their managers' implementation efforts. Finally, Kehoe and Wright discussed the need to focus on both human resource (HR) practice design and the implementation of those practices.

Given the key role that HPWP are believed to play, it is surprising that so few studies have examined whether or how such practices are implemented. Among the few studies that exist, most have used qualitative methods (e.g., line manager interviews) to understand line manager HPWP implementation (Cassell, Nadin, Gray, & Clegg, 2002; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Currie & Procter, 2001; Renwick, 2000, 2003). In addition, much of the existing implementation research has been conducted outside North America (Cassell et al., 2002; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999; Currie & Procter, 2001; Renwick, 2000, 2003; van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002).

In response to appeals to conduct such research (e.g., Becker & Huselid, 2006; Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1999; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Van Iddekinge et al., 2009), the purpose of this study was to test whether line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions mediate relations between HPWP and employee attitudes and behavior. In doing so, we contribute to SHRM theory and research by testing Becker and Huselid's (2006) assertion that HPWP implementation plays a vital role in driving key workplace outcomes. Furthermore, we start to identify possible factors that may affect the extent to which line managers implement their organization's HPWP. Specifically, we develop and test a model that links line manager implementation competencies (i.e., HR and political skill competencies), line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions, and employee attitudes and behaviors. Examination of this model contributes to the literature by increasing knowledge of the under-

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studied relations between HPWP and employee attitudes and behavior (Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

Theoretical Foundations and Hypothesis Development

Figure 1 presents our theoretical model, which proposes that HPWP and line manager competencies affect employee attitudes and behavior through line managers' perceptions regarding their HPWP implementation efforts. This model integrates ideas from two theoretical perspectives. First, Ferris et al.'s (1998) social context model highlights the links between organizational climate, HPWP and their implementation, employee attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately, organizational effectiveness. By illustrating these sequential relationships, social context theory provides an overall context for understanding the important process of how line manager HPWP implementation efforts shape employee outcomes.

Next, within Ferris et al.'s overall context, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) provided a more specific understanding of how the "strength of an HRM system" impacts the HPWP-firm performance relationship. Bowen and Ostroff argued that contexts or climates that are "strong" are those where individuals possess a common perception and interpretation of events and shared understandings regarding expected behaviors and outcomes. The authors further suggested that employees' attitudinal and behavioral responses to HR practices are a function of only the practices and systems they perceive to exist. Thus, for HR practices to gain employee attention and to demonstrate intended effects on employee attitudes and behaviors, an organization's line managers need to make HR practices salient to employees.

HPWP and HPWP Implementation Perceptions

Even when HPWP are adopted and appear "on the books" of organizations, there may be variability in whether or how the practices are implemented. Potential reasons for this can include that the HPWP were adopted for "show" to give those in and outside the organization the impression that the company is well-managed (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; Galang, Elsik, & Russ, 1999). In other cases, HPWP do not get implemented because managers do not wish to incur the required time or cost, or perhaps managers do not believe the practices are effective. In addition, some organizations purposely do not implement their HPWP for political reasons, such as personal agendas, conflicting interests, or personal

alliances (e.g., Butler, Ferris, & Napier, 1991; Johns, 1993). Finally, competing pressures for HR investment may result in different HPWP implementation levels (Harrell-Cook & Ferris, 1997). For example, a firm's leadership might prefer to emphasize performance management practice implementation over training practice implementation.

Conversely, in some organizations, line managers might implement a high percentage of their organization's HPWP. For example, the number of HPWP in an organization likely signals the organization's intent to implement the practices (Ferris et al., 1998). Because many line managers generally attempt to carry out their HR duties in an effective way (Renwick, 2003), this can ultimately result in higher HPWP implementation levels. Similarly, we suggest that the number of HPWP in existence likely indicates to line managers the organization's seriousness about HPWP. This, in turn, likely signals line managers to implement those practices.

Hypothesis 1: The number of HPWP in the organization is positively related to line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions.

HPWP Implementation Perceptions and Employee Outcomes

Although firm-level performance relationships are important, they are influenced by many factors and are likely to be rather distal to HPWP implementation (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Consequently, we propose that HPWP implementation perceptions directly impact employee-level decisions regarding their intentions to stay with the organization, how much effort they give toward performing their job, and their perceptions regarding workplace fairness. These outcomes, in turn, likely impact organization-level outcomes.

Firms that use HPWP show employees that the organization is investing in them as human resource assets. Consequently, employees are likely to reciprocate this investment with greater organizational commitment and loyalty (Hom et al., 2009). In turn, higher levels of employee commitment and loyalty should decrease employee turnover intentions. Use of HPWP also should have a positive impact on employee job performance. For example, prior research found that HPWP are associated with greater employee productivity (e.g., Huselid, 1995; Ichniowski, Shaw, & Prennushi, 1997; Macduffie, 1995). Use of effective HR practices is thought to influence performance primarily by improving employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities and their motivation to apply those capabilities (Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Finally, HPWP can influence perceptions of workplace fairness, such as employees' perceptions that the organization involves them in decision making. HPWP that invest in employees (e.g., training and development programs) and provide recognition (e.g., rewards) signal that the organization supports its employees and seeks to build ongoing relationships with them. Accordingly, when employees perceive that their organization offers and implements HPWP, they are likely to believe that the organization is more professional, consistent, and fair (Albrecht & Travaglione, 2003; Gilliland, 1994).

Hypothesis 2: Line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions are (a) negatively related to employee turnover intentions, (b) positively related to employee job performance, and (c) positively related to employee participative decision-making perceptions.

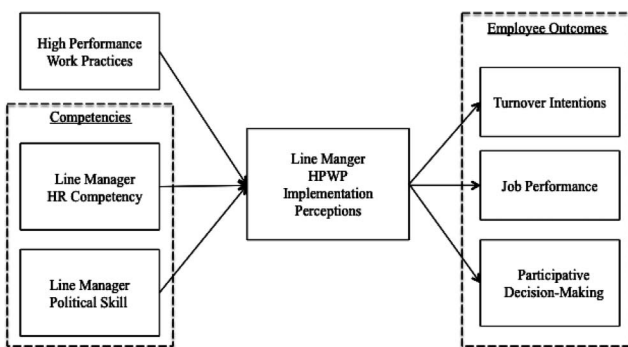


Figure 1. Research model of high-performance work practices (HPWP) implementation.

HPWP Implementation Perceptions as a Mediator Between HPWP and Employee Outcomes

As discussed, the proposed mediation effect in Figure 1 is based on the idea that HPWP implementation plays a key role in shaping HR systems and subsequent organizational effectiveness (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ferris et al., 1998). In this view, managers' ineffective HPWP implementation should negatively impact employee attitudes and behaviors. Other scholars have discussed a similar view of the potential mediating role of HPWP implementation, characterizing implementation as part of the unexplored links between HPWP and work performance (e.g., Becker & Huselid, 2006; Ferris et al., 1999).

In some firms, HR policies exist only on paper (Khilji & Wang, 2006; Storey, 1992), whereas other firms have developed effective HR practices, but their line managers do not consistently implement those practices (Van Iddekinge et al., 2009). As a result, firms may fail to meet optimum performance levels, not because their HR practices are poor, but because the practices are not consistently implemented (Wright, McMahan, Snell, & Gerhart, 2001). Therefore, line managers' HPWP implementation should play a significant mediating role between HPWP and employee outcomes.

Hypothesis 3: Line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions mediate the relationships between HPWP and (a) employee turnover intentions, (b) job performance, and (c) participative decision-making perceptions.

Line Manager Competencies and HPWP Implementation Perceptions

If HPWP implementation is necessary to affect work outcomes, and because line managers are responsible for such implementation, it is important to identify line manager competencies that lead to higher HPWP implementation. Unfortunately, the SHRM literature largely has neglected the managers who must implement the organization's HPWP and those managers' skills and competencies (Sikora & Ferris, 2014). As a result, we identified two main line manager competencies that may affect the extent to which they implement their organization's HPWP. The first is HR competency. Although we are not aware of any studies that examined the role of HR competencies on HPWP implementation, a few researchers have proposed a possible relationship between these constructs. For example, van der Zee et al. (2002) and Cassell et al. (2002) suggested that many line managers lack a background and training in HR and therefore may lack the skills and expertise needed to implement HR practices.

The skills and experience that managers possess regarding the technical aspects of HPWP should play a key role in their HPWP implementation. These HR competencies reflect the "content" aspects of HPWP (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). As with any complex job responsibility, when managers lack HR-related knowledge or skills, their HPWP implementation likelihood should be reduced. Conversely, it is likely that when line managers perceive themselves as having high HR competency levels, they are more likely to perceive themselves as implementing their organization's HPWP.

Hypothesis 4: Line managers' HR competency level is positively related to HPWP implementation perceptions.

A second line manager competency that may impact HPWP implementation is political skill. We included political skill because competencies managers possess relative to social influence, communication, and the management of shared meaning also should affect their HPWP implementation perceptions. For example, when line managers perceive themselves as having high political skill competencies, they are more likely to perceive themselves as implementing their organization's HPWP. In this view, competencies such as political skill reflect the "process" aspects of HPWP (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). van der Zee et al. (2002) determined that organizations' social and political pressures (i.e., power and autonomy needs, questions regarding other managers' staffing practice use, and time or budget pressures) impacted line managers' use of structured interviews. Similarly, we suggest that when effective HR implementation is a profoundly held organizational belief, politically skilled line managers should be more apt to perceive themselves as consistently implementing those practices.

Hypothesis 5: Line manager political skill is positively related to HPWP implementation perceptions.

HPWP Implementation Perceptions as a Mediator Between Line Manager Competencies and Employee Outcomes

Line managers interact with their employees on a regular basis. These interactions include recurring HR activities, such as performance evaluation, compensation, training, and employee recognition. As such, line managers' HPWP implementation actions have real positive or negative consequences that are directly seen and experienced by their employees. Bowen and Ostroff (2004) suggested that line managers convey and "sell" HPWP in ways that create a collective set of meanings and understanding, which then affect employee perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Thus, we propose that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions play an important mediating role in the relationship between their HR and political skill competencies and employee outcomes.

Hypothesis 6: Line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions mediate the relationships between line manager HR competency and (a) employee turnover intentions, (b) job performance, and (c) participative decision-making perceptions.

Hypothesis 7: Line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions mediate the relationships between line manager political skill and (a) employee turnover intentions, (b) job performance, and (c) participative decision-making perceptions.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The sample included line managers with at least two employees who report directly to them. Survey invitations and links to an online survey were e-mailed to approximately 14,900 business school alumni from a large university located in the southeastern United States. Those e-mails generated 755 line manager survey responses. This resulted in a 5.1% line manager survey response

rate. After eliminating partially completed surveys, there were a total of 507 fully completed line manager surveys. The line managers provided contact information for 227 of their employees. From this group, 154 employees completed the subordinate survey, resulting in a subordinate survey response rate of 67.8%. Further, there were 109 unique manager-subordinate survey sets, which included 78 sets with one subordinate response and 31 sets with two or more subordinate responses. Participants that comprised the total line manager sample ($N = 507$) represented a variety of business (77%), government (12%), nonprofit (5%), and educational (6%) organizations. Within those organizations, the respondents included 26% first-level supervisors, 19% department managers, 20% directors, and 34% vice presidents or above.

Although the subordinate response rate was high, the manager response rate was much lower and consistent with previous HR research (e.g., Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert, & Choragwicka, 2010; Delaney, Lewin, & Ichniowski, 1989; Kulik & Perry, 2008). We also note that research suggests that online surveys yield substantially lower response rates than other survey types, such as mail surveys and/or in-person interviews (Simsek & Veiga, 2000). Because of this low line manager response rate, we explored potential nonresponse bias by comparing the respondents to the overall college of business alumni population on a number of demographic categories. Independent t tests indicated no significant mean differences for age (population $M = 2.88$, sample $M = 3.02$; $p = .17$), gender (men coded as 1 and women coded as 2; population $M = 1.36$, sample $M = 1.31$; $p = .48$), or education level (population education level $M = 3.48$, sample education level $M = 3.51$; $p = .24$).

Measures

Unless noted, variables were measured on a Likert-type scale, with anchors that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In addition, the line managers provided data for the line manager competencies, the number and type of HPWP in their organizations, and HPWP implementation perceptions. Their subordinates provided data for the work outcomes.

HPWP and HPWP Implementation Perceptions

We could not find any existing measures of HPWP implementation perceptions, so we developed a new measure as part of this study. In doing so, we relied primarily on content from the HPWP measures used by Wright, Gardner, and Moynihan (2003) and Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung, and Lake (1995). We developed 26 individual HPWP items, which reflected five HPWP sets: staffing, training and employee development, performance appraisal, compensation, and employee involvement and communications (HPWP items and sets are shown in Appendix A).

HPWP. Line managers were asked which of the 26 individual HPWP were present in their organization. Consistent with past research (e.g., Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Huselid, 1995), we created an overall composite by summing the number of HPWP present in each manager's organization ($\alpha = .82$).

HPWP implementation perceptions. Line managers were asked to rate the degree to which they implemented each HPWP present in their organization (see Appendix A). This measure was

first tested in a pilot study with line managers working in a 300-bed, nonprofit community hospital in the southeastern United States. We used data from this study to reword a few items for improved clarity and to replace a few items that did not perform as effectively.¹ The final measure used in this study was a composite of line managers' perceptions of the degree to which they believed they implemented each of the five HPWP sets ($\alpha = .79$).

Line Manager Competencies

HR competency is defined as line managers' perceptions of their HR-related knowledge, skills, and abilities as a function of their task confidence, prior job experiences, and HR-related training. We measured this variable with three items developed for and originally tested in the pilot study ($\alpha = .72$). The items for this and the following measures are shown in Appendix B. We measured line managers' *political skill* competency with a six-item scale (e.g., Ahearn et al., 2004; Perrewé et al., 2004). This scale focuses on managers' ability to effectively read, understand, and influence others ($\alpha = .78$).

Employee Outcomes

We measured *turnover intentions* using measures adapted from Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, and Erez (2001) and Hom, Griffeth, and Sellaro (1984). This three-item scale focuses on employees' intent to leave their present organization within the next 12 months ($\alpha = .97$). We measured *job performance* using Kipnis and Schmidt's (1988) scale, which focuses on employees' perceptions regarding their ability to meet the task and contextual performance expectations of their job ($\alpha = .88$). We used a measure from Parker, Baltes, and Christiansen (1997) to assess employee perceptions of *participative decision making*. Although this scale is sometimes used to measure procedural justice perceptions, we used items that focus on employee input and involvement in organizational decision making ($\alpha = .79$).²

We conducted a number of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to assess the appropriateness of treating some of the measures as separate variables in subsequent analyses. The following indices were used to assess model fit: Tucker-Lewis index ($TLI > .90$ acceptable, $>.95$ excellent; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), comparative fit index ($CFI > .90$ acceptable, $>.95$ excellent; Bentler, 1990; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), and the root-mean-square error of approximation ($RMSEA < .08$ acceptable, $<.05$ excellent; Brown & Cudeck, 1993). First, we assessed the appropriateness of treating HPWP (i.e., the number of HPWP in the organization) and HPWP implementation perceptions as separate measures. The results for this and subsequent CFAs are displayed in Table 2. In this analysis, the fit indices for the two-factor model ($TLI = .93$, $CFI =$

¹ Further details concerning the pilot study and its results are available from David M. Sikora.

² We also collected data on line managers' demographic and background characteristics, including age, gender, education, position level, length of service, years of managerial experience, functional area, business type, and organization size. However, all of these variables exhibited small correlations (i.e., less than .15) with the HPWP and outcome measures, and including the demographic variables in the models we tested did not substantively impact the results. Thus, we chose not to control them in the final analyses.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliability Estimates

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. HPWP	15.22	6.62	.82						
2. LM HR competency	3.72	0.68	.21**	.70					
3. LM political skill	4.17	0.44	.12**	.37**	.78				
4. HPWP implementation perceptions	4.04	0.63	.39**	.34**	.21**	.79			
5. Employee turnover intentions	2.20	1.21	-.22*	-.14	-.04	-.67**	.97		
6. Employee job performance	3.88	0.79	.16	.24*	.21*	.69**	-.61**	.88	
7. Employee participative decision making	3.49	0.73	.13	.14	.09	.63**	-.68**	.69**	.79

Note. LM = line manager; HPWP = high-performance work practices. For line manager human resource (HR) competency and political skill, $n = 507$. For employee turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision-making, $n = 109$. For HPWP and line manager HPWP implementation perceptions, $ns = 507$ and 109. Reliability estimates (α) are shown in bold on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

.96, RMSEA = .06) were much better than the indices for the one-factor model (TLI = .59, CFI = .74, RMSEA = .16). Additionally, there was a significant $\Delta\chi^2$ between the two models. These results supported treating HPWP and line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions as separate variables.

Next, we examined whether the HPWP implementation perceptions measure assessed the five intended HPWP sets or just a single, global implementation factor. These results revealed that the fit for the five-factor model (TLI = .88, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .07) was much better than the fit for the one-factor model (TLI = .62, CFI = .71, RMSEA = .12). Additionally, the five-factor model fit significantly better according to the $\Delta\chi^2$ test. As a result, we used the global HPWP and HPWP implementation perceptions variables in the primary analyses. However, we also explored the relative importance of the five individual HPWP implementation factors.

We also assessed the appropriateness of using three separate outcome variables (i.e., turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision-making perceptions) versus an overall composite outcome variable. In this analysis, the fit indices for the three-factor model (TLI = .91, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04) were much stronger than the indices for the one-factor model (TLI =

.55, CFI = .68, RMSEA = .10). In addition, there was a significant $\Delta\chi^2$ between the two models. This result provided support for treating the three outcomes as separate variables.

Results

To maximize the available data, we tested the research model in two ways. First, all correlations and direct effects were tested using all the line manager responses ($N = 507$). Next, because of the no-missing data requirements of the mediation tests we performed (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010), mediation effects were tested using the smaller matched line manager-subordinate response set ($N = 109$). However, we first examined whether there were any notable differences between the two data sets. Independent t tests indicated no significant mean differences for any of the model variables. Second, we assessed the main research model (see Figure 2), first using all available data (i.e., $N = 109$ –507) and then using only cases for which we had complete data ($N = 109$). The fit statistics for the research model were highly similar between the two data sets. For example, the CFI was the same (.92), and the RMSEA of the all-available data set (.04) was very similar to that of the complete data set (.05). These results suggest that the two data sets

Table 2

Comparison of a Priori and Alternative Models Involving High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP), HPWP Implementation Perceptions, and Employee Outcomes

Model comparison	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	χ^2	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$
HPWP and HPWP implementation perceptions						
Two-factor model (a priori)	.93	.96	.06	115.27	34	—
One-factor model (alternative)	.59	.74	.15	512.20	35	393.93*
HPWP implementation perceptions						
Five-factor model (a priori)	.88	.92	.07	296.40	94	—
One-factor model (alternative)	.62	.71	.12	842.11	104	545.71*
Outcome variables						
Three-factor model (a priori)	.91	.94	.04	124.97	62	—
One-factor model (alternative)	.55	.68	.10	399.47	65	274.50*
Full vs. partial mediation						
Full mediation (a priori)	.91	.92	.04	776.16	455	—
Partial mediation (alternative)	.90	.92	.04	772.20	446	3.99

Note. For line manager human resource (HR) competency and political skill, $n = 507$. For employee turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision making, $n = 109$. For HPWP and line manager HPWP implementation perceptions, $ns = 507$ and 109. TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation.

* $p < .001$.

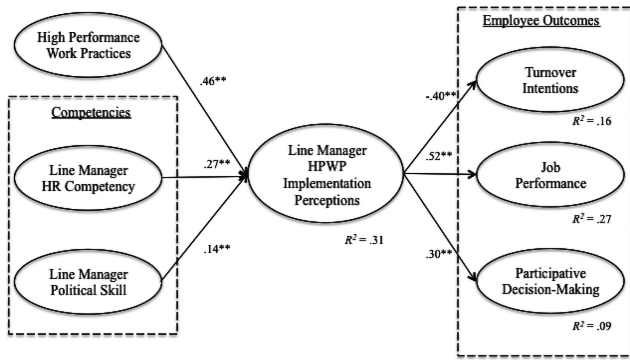


Figure 2. Standardized path coefficients for model with high-performance work practices (HPWP) implementation perceptions as a mediator between HPWP and line manager competencies and employee outcomes (covariances among the line manager competencies and among the employee outcomes, and the items for each construct, are omitted for clarity).

provided very similar results. Consequently, the model shown in Figure 2 was evaluated using all the available data (i.e., $N = 109$ –507), whereas the mediation tests were conducted on the complete data set ($N = 109$).

Assessment of Research Model

Using Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach, we first estimated a measurement model that contained the 34 items and seven latent constructs that underlie the model in Figure 2. The measurement model fit the data well, $\chi^2(443, N = 109) = 684.92$, $p < .05$ (RMSEA = .03, CFI = .94, TLI = .93), and all of the path coefficients were significant ($p < .01$). Further, with the exception of line manager political skill, all of the average variances extracted (AVE) were greater than .50 (AVE ranged from .45–.92), thus demonstrating convergent validity (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993). Discriminant validity was tested through the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach, where the AVEs are compared to the shared variances (i.e., construct correlations squared). This procedure resulted in all AVEs being greater than the shared variances, indicating discriminant validity. Additionally, construct reliabilities ranged from .70 to .97, which suggests that the scores generally were reliable. Given the good fit for the measurement model, we created composites for each latent variable and used the composites in a structural model to test our hypotheses (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The structural model (see Figure 2) also provided good fit to the data, $\chi^2(455, N = 507) = 776.19$, $p < .05$ (RMSEA = .04, CFI = .92, TLI = .91). Note that the residual terms among the (correlated) dependent variables were allowed to covary in the final structural model.

Finally, the research model explained a reasonable amount of variance in HPWP implementation perceptions, as well as variance in turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision-making outcomes. HPWP and line manager competencies (i.e., HR and political skill competencies) explained 31% of the variance in HPWP implementation perceptions. In turn, HPWP, line manager competencies, and HPWP implementation perceptions explained between 9% and 27% of the variance in the employee outcomes.

Hypotheses Tests

HPWP and HPWP implementation perceptions. Hypothesis 1 proposed that the number of HPWP within line managers' organizations would relate positively to line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions. This hypothesis was supported as the relationship between HPWP and HPWP implementation perceptions was positive and significant ($\gamma = .46$, $p < .01$).

HPWP implementation perceptions and employee outcomes. Hypothesis 2 proposed that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions would relate to employee attitudes and behavior. In support of Hypothesis 2a (H2a), the relationship between HPWP implementation perceptions and turnover intention was significantly negative ($\beta = -.40$, $p < .01$). Consistent with H2b, HPWP implementation perceptions were positively related to job performance ($\beta = .52$, $p < .01$). Finally, H2c was supported as HPWP implementation perceptions were positively related to participative decision-making perceptions ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$).

To further examine relations between HPWP implementation perceptions and the outcomes, we evaluated several additional models in which we decomposed the implementation variable into its five components (see Table 4) and then conducted a series of relative weight analyses (Johnson, 2001; Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2011). Specifically, we included the five HPWP sets as individual predictors of each outcome (i.e., turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision making) to determine the percentage of outcome variance each HPWP set explained. Overall, perceived implementation of training and development and compensation practices emerged as the strongest and most consistent predictors, together accounting for between 61% and 74% of the explained variance in each outcome. Perceptions of training and development practices implementation accounted for the largest percentage of explained variance in turnover intentions (39.36%) and participative decision making (35.69%). Conversely, compensation practices implementation perceptions accounted for the largest percentage of explained variance in job performance (45.13%).³

Line manager competencies and HPWP implementation perceptions. In Hypothesis 4, we proposed that line manager HR competencies would be positively related to managers' HPWP implementation perceptions. This hypothesis was supported as line manager HR competency was positively related to HPWP implementation perceptions ($\gamma = .27$, $p < .01$). Similarly, Hypothesis 5 was supported as line manager political skill also was positively related to HPWP implementation perceptions ($\gamma = .14$, $p < .01$).

HPWP implementation perceptions as mediator. Hypotheses 3a–3c proposed that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions would mediate relations between HPWP and employee outcomes. Hypotheses 6a–6c proposed that HPWP implementation perceptions would mediate relations between line manager HR competency and employee outcomes. Finally, Hypotheses 7a–7c proposed that HPWP implementation perceptions would mediate the relationships between line manager political skill and employee outcomes. To test these hypotheses, we used Zhao et al.'s (2010) approach, which uses a bootstrapping test to assess the significance of the direct and indirect paths within the model. As shown in Table 3, the indirect

³ We thank an anonymous reviewer for the suggestion to include this information (and the related information in Table 4) regarding the relative importance of the individual HPWP implementation variables.

Table 3

Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP) and Line Manager Competencies on Employee Outcomes

Hypothesized paths	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	95% CI	
HPWP → Employee turnover intentions	-.11*	.00	-.11*	-.28	-.01
HPWP → Employee job performance	.13*	.00	.13*	.02	.30
HPWP → Employee participative decision-making perceptions	.07*	.00	.07*	.01	.22
LM HR competency → Employee turnover intentions	-.14**	.00	-.14**	-.33	-.29
LM HR competency → Employee job performance	.17**	.00	.17**	.04	.37
LM HR competency → Employee participative decision-making perceptions	.09*	.00	.09*	.01	.28
LM political skill → Employee turnover intentions	-.08*	.00	-.08*	-.20	-.01
LM political skill → Employee job performance	.09*	.00	.09*	.01	.24
LM political skill → Employee participative decision-making perceptions	.05*	.00	.05*	.01	.16

Note. LM = line manager. For line manager human resource (HR) competency and political skill, $n = 507$. For employee turnover intentions, job performance, and participative decision-making perceptions, $n = 109$. CI = 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect. All effects are standardized. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

effects of HPWP (through HPWP implementation perceptions) on (H3a) employee turnover intentions ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$), (H3b) job performance ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), and (H3c) participative decision-making perceptions ($\beta = .07$, $p < .05$) were significant. In addition, the direct effects of the HPWP on the three outcome variables were nonsignificant. These results provide support for Hypothesis 3 and suggest that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions fully mediated relations between HPWP and employee outcomes.

The mediation effects for line manager competencies were similarly significant (see Table 3). The indirect effects of line manager HR competency (through HPWP implementation perceptions) on (H6a) employee turnover intentions ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$), (H6b) job performance ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$), and (H6c) participative decision-making perceptions ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$) were significant. The indirect effects of line manager political skill on (H7a) turnover intentions ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .05$), (H7b) job performance ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), and (H7c) participative decision-making perceptions ($\beta = .05$, $p < .05$) also were significant. In addition, the direct effects of line manager HR competency and political skill on the three outcome variables were nonsignificant. Thus, in support of Hypotheses 6 and 7, HPWP implementation perceptions fully mediated relations between line manager competencies and employee outcomes for both HR competency and political skill.

Discussion

Contributions to Theory and Research

This study found that line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions play an important mediating role between HPWP and employee outcomes. It also found that managers' HPWP implementation perceptions mediate the relationships between line manager implementation competencies and employee outcomes. Accordingly, our findings provide initial empirical support for Becker and Huselid's (2006) proposition regarding the mediating role of implementation. These results also highlight the importance of change implementers' (i.e., line managers) efforts in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. By empirically demonstrating the effects of line managers' HPWP implementation on employee outcomes, this research represents a natural evolution of the SHRM literature. As SHRM research progresses, line managers' HPWP implementation efforts should become a key part of this expanded paradigm.

Given the importance of implementation perceptions, this study also delineated several factors that could affect the extent to which line managers implement their firm's HPWP. Our findings suggest that line managers who possess higher HR competency levels and greater political skill are more likely to implement their organiza-

Table 4

Results of Relative Weight Analysis of Line Managers' Perceived Implementation of the Individual High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP) on Employee Outcomes

HPWP set	Turnover intentions		Job performance		Participative decision making	
	Relative weights	Rescaled weights	Relative weights	Rescaled weights	Relative weights	Rescaled weights
Staffing	.021	12.95%	.006	3.17%	.014	14.23%
Training and development	.063	39.36%	.056	28.57%	.034	35.69%
Performance appraisal	.010	6.20%	.010	5.29%	.012	13.05%
Compensation	.055	34.53%	.088	45.13%	.024	25.67%
Involvement and communication	.011	6.97%	.035	17.84%	.011	11.36%

Note. Rescaled weights reflect the percentage of explained variance in the outcome for which each HPWP accounts.

tion's HPWP than managers who possess lower levels of these variables. These results further illustrate the critical role that line managers play in shaping HPWP implementation and employee outcomes. A final contribution of this study is the development of a HPWP implementation perceptions measure. The "best" HR practices have limited value if managers cannot, or choose not to, implement the practices. A key implication of this research is that to truly understand the value of HPWP, researchers need to measure the extent to which the practices are consistently and effectively implemented.

Practical Implications

These results also provide a number of key insights for practitioners. For example, organizations should help their line managers understand how their implementation of the firm's HR practices can affect employees and the organization as a whole. Doing so may help line managers better appreciate the important role they play in shaping employee outcomes. Furthermore, organizations seeking to improve workplace outcomes should regularly assess whether and how line managers are implementing the firm's HPWP. As part of this process, organizations should examine the reasons why certain managers may not be implementing the practices. This assessment, for example, could reveal the need for particular interventions, such as increased line manager training, provision of resources, or incentives.

Finally, organizational leaders considering the adoption of HPWP should account for the commitment the entire implementation process requires. Doing so may help ensure that management and employees clearly understand the rationale for using the practices, which should facilitate success through the establishment of a strong and shared climate (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). If organizations do not fully commit to both HPWP adoption and implementation, they may encounter gaps between the practices the organization develops, managers' implementation of the practices, and employees' perceptions of the practices.

Study Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings and that future research might be able to address. First, the line manager response rate was low (5.1%). Although tests for nonresponse bias tests revealed no apparent issues, the low response rate does introduce some uncertainty with respect to sample representativeness and the external validity of inferences. Second, we asked line managers to rate the extent to which they implemented each of the HPWP present in their organization. It is important to note that this approach assesses perceptions regarding the degree of HPWP implementation and not actual HPWP implementation or the effectiveness of that implementation. Although line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions likely are related to actual implementation, we encourage future research to explore ways to measure both perceived and actual implementation, including the degree and effectiveness of the implementation. Future research also could explore whether certain implementation activities (e.g., the way HPWP are communicated to employees, the order in which HPWP are implemented) affect HPWP effectiveness. This "how-to" issue represents a natural evolution of our implementation findings.

Third, although we collected data from multiple sources (i.e., line managers and employees), common method variance still may have affected the magnitude of some of the relationships. For example, that employees provided data for all three outcomes likely contributed to the high correlations we observed among these variables (see Table 1). Future implementation research might explore alternative measures that assess the constructs of interest but do so in ways that may be less susceptible to method variance, such as outcome measures that are less subjective (e.g., productivity records, actual turnover). Finally, the outcomes in our study reflected employees' perceptions of participative decision making, performance, and their likelihood to remain with the organization. Although we believe these outcomes are relatively proximal to HPWP implementation, we encourage future studies to examine implementation effects on more distal, firm-level outcomes, such as productivity, sales growth, and profitability.

Conclusion

Many years of research have focused on HPWP and their effects on firm and employee performance. In contrast, little empirical attention has been devoted to the implementation of those HPWP or has tested the proposition that implementation mediates between HPWP and employee attitudes and behaviors (Becker & Huselid, 2006). This study highlights the critical role of line managers' HPWP implementation perceptions on employee-level outcomes. We hope our findings stimulate additional research on the role HPWP implementation plays in SHRM theory, research, and practice.

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Appendix A

High-Performance Work Practices

For the following HR practices, please use these guidelines when describing your use of each practice:

1. *Never*. I do not use this practice.
2. *Rarely*. I use this practice in about 25% of the chances when I can.
3. *Sometimes*. I use this practice in about 50% of the chances when I can.
4. *Often*. I use this practice in about 75% of the chances when I can.
5. *Always*. I use this practice in all chances when I can.

Staffing Practices

1. Formal job applicant tests (paper and pencil or work sample tests).
2. Structured interviews with job applicants (job-related questions, same questions asked of all job applicants, use of rating scales).
3. Hiring decisions based on formal applicant assessment criteria (assessment of job applicants against job description requirements).

Training and Employee Development Practices

4. Cross-training of employees within each department.
5. Training resources and programs regularly available to employees.
6. Employees' performance appraisal results used to plan employee development activities.
7. Job performance/merit used to select employees for promotion.

8. Employee job rotation programs.

9. Qualified internal employees provided with the opportunity to be promoted to positions of greater pay and/or responsibility (job posting program).

Performance Appraisal Practices

10. Regular (at least once per year) formal performance evaluation.
11. Quantifiable results used to determine employee performance appraisal ratings.
12. Performance appraisal results used to determine promotional decisions.
13. Rank-ordering of employees for performance appraisal results.
14. Performance appraisal results used to determine employee compensation decisions.

Employee Compensation Practices

15. Employee compensation program information shared with employees.
16. Employee benefit program information shared with employees.
17. Employees eligible for individual incentive pay (individual and/or team-based bonuses/commissions).
18. Employee pay increases based on job performance.
19. Employee incentive pay/bonuses based on job performance.

(Appendices continue)

Employee Involvement and Communication Practices

20. Organization's strategies, objectives and values are shared with employees.

21. Customer service and satisfaction goals and results are shared with employees.

22. Organization's financial performance is shared with employees.

23. Organization's HR policies and practices are shared with employees

24. Periodic use of employee attitude surveys.

25. Formal employee participation processes such as quality improvement groups, problem solving groups, unit councils, roundtable discussions and/or suggestion systems.

26. Employees provided with access to reasonable and fair complaint process.

Appendix B

Line Manager Competency Measures

For each of the following statements, please select your level of agreement:

1. *Strongly disagree*
2. *Disagree*
3. *Neither agree nor disagree*
4. *Agree*
5. *Strongly agree*

Line Manager HR Competencies

1. I can usually handle whatever HR responsibilities come my way.

2. My past job experiences prepared me well for performing my HR responsibilities.

3. The training I have received was relevant for performing my HR responsibilities.

Line Manager Political Skill Competencies

1. I find it easy to envision myself in the position of others.
2. I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.
3. It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people.
4. I understand people well.
5. I am good at getting others to respond positively to me.
6. I usually try to find common ground with others.

Employee Outcome Measures

For each of the following statements, please select your level of agreement:

1. *Strongly disagree*
2. *Disagree*
3. *Neither agree nor disagree*

4. *Agree*

5. *Strongly agree*

Turnover Intentions

1. I intend to leave this organization in the next 12 months.

2. I feel strongly about leaving this organization within the next 12 months.

3. It is likely that I will leave this organization in the next 12 months.

Job Performance

1. I am able to work independently.

2. I am able to work cooperatively with my peers.

3. I am able to solve problems.

4. I am motivated to work hard.

5. I have a strong potential for promotion.

6. I have high overall job performance.

Participative Decision-Making Perceptions

1. Decisions are made on the basis of research, data, and technical criteria, as opposed to political concerns.

2. People with the most knowledge are involved in the resolution of problems.

3. People involved in implementing decisions here have a say in making the decisions.

4. Members of my work unit are involved in making decisions that directly affect their work.

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