Employee Relations: The International Journal

Enhancing employee performance and retention: the mediating role of job satisfaction in high-performance work systems

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Received 9 April 2025
Revised 1 August 2025
Accepted 11 September 2025

Abstract

Purpose – We build on the main tenets of the social exchange theory and the job demands-resources theory to investigate the black box through which high-performance work systems (HPWS) influence employee outcomes. Specifically, we analyse both direct effects on employees' turnover intentions and job performance and indirect effects through increased job satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were gathered from 417 employees working in hotels, restaurants and car rental offices located in the Canary Islands (Spain).

Findings – Through partial least squares structural equation modelling, we confirm that HPWS positively influence job satisfaction, which in turn decreases turnover intentions and enhances performance.

Research limitations/implications – This study contributes to the human resources management (HRM) literature by empirically validating job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism linking HPWS with employee outcomes in tourism, a relationship previously underexplored. For practice, it offers specific guidance on implementing HPWS to reduce turnover and improve performance, highlighting specific bundles for that aim.

Originality/value – This study is among the first to examine the associations between HPWS and several individual-level variables through job satisfaction. Moreover, it includes a diverse sample of employees from different tourism subsectors. We also extend the HPWS literature by testing the effects of AMO bundles, providing a disaggregated view of HRM practices.

Keywords High-performance work systems (HPWS), Job satisfaction, Turnover intention, Job performance, Tourism management

Paper type Research article

1. Introduction

Employees are essential in hospitality and tourism companies because of their critical role in providing quality services and ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chen *et al*., 2019; Karatepe, 2013a). However, two main concerns arise in this context. First, organizations typically demand employees to display high performance by devoting extra effort and energy to their tasks to deliver superior customer experiences (Karatepe *et al*., 2006). Second, employee turnover negatively affects productivity and efficiency and significantly increases recruitment and training costs for new staff (Wan and Chan, 2013). Consequently, employee retention has received substantial attention in the scientific literature in the tourism sector (Lim *et al*., 2023; Wong *et al*., 2019).

Employee Relations: The International Journal

e-ISSN: 1758-7069
p-ISSN: 0142-5455
DOI 10.1108/ER-04-2025-0257

Nevertheless, positions within hospitality and tourism have traditionally been characterized by their low wages, heavy workloads, unsocial working hours, and limited career development opportunities (Baum, 2015; Kusluvan *et al*., 2010; Ladkin, 2011). As a result, employees experience exhaustion and reduced levels of job satisfaction, compromising their performance and their intentions to remain within their organizations. These challenges highlight the need to examine organizational practices that can improve job satisfaction and employee retention in this demanding context.

Two relevant management theories explain this situation: the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) and the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). According to SET, employees underperform and consider leaving when negative job conditions signal that their employer does not care about them (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). From the lenses of the JD-R theory, negative job characteristics are viewed as job demands that reduce satisfaction and negatively impact employee outcomes, while positive organizational resources can mitigate these negative consequences (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Furthermore, evidence suggests that the effectiveness of human resources management (HRM) practices depends not only on their design but also significantly on how they are implemented (Basnyat and Clarence Lao, 2020).

In this sense, high-performance work systems (HPWS), defined as "coherent practices that enhance the skills of the workforce, participation in decision-making, and motivation to put forth discretionary effort" (Sun *et al*., 2007, p. 558), may address these problems. HPWS have gained attention in strategic human resources management (SHRM) literature, emphasizing the benefits of combining HRM practices rather than individual ones (Delery and Doty, 1996; Delery and Gupta, 2016; Jiang *et al*., 2012). This "systems approach" highlights that the joint implementation of various complementary HRM practices has synergistic effects on employee attitudes and behaviour, surpassing the impact of isolated ones (Delery and Gupta, 2016). Research suggests HPWS improve organizational performance by positively influencing employees' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (Beltrán-Martín *et al*., 2025; Dorta-Afonso and Romero-Domínguez, 2025; Huertas-Valdivia *et al*., 2018; Karatepe, 2013a). However, most studies addressing HPWS have been conducted outside the tourism industry, limiting the generalizability of findings due to sector-specific characteristics (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a).

In this manuscript, we argue that HPWS provide clear signals of organizational support and commitment, encouraging high-quality and long-term relationships between employees and their employers (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023). According to SET (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), employees reciprocate this perceived organizational support (POS) with improved performance and lower turnover intentions. Additionally, the JD-R theory frames HPWS as organizational resources that help employees confront job demands by increasing their satisfaction and engagement at work (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023). Consequently, HPWS are expected to enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover intentions, and improve individual performance (Kong *et al*., 2018). Based on this rationale, we pose the following research question:

Do HPWS improve employee outcomes in terms of reduced turnover intentions and enhanced performance?

To address this question, the study sets out the following objectives: (1) to examine the effects of HPWS on employee performance and turnover intentions; (2) to analyse whether job satisfaction acts as a mediating mechanism in these relationships, and (3) to investigate if HPWS bundles differently relate with these outcomes. To empirically analyse these relationships, we conducted a survey with 417 employees from hotels, restaurants, and car rental offices in the Canary Islands (Spain). Using partial least square structural equation modelling, we confirmed that HPWS directly reduce turnover intentions and enhance job performance and exert an indirect positive effect on job performance through increased job satisfaction. This study is among the first to include diverse subsectors within tourism, addressing recent calls for broader sampling (Murphy *et al*., 2018). Consequently, our findings may have broader generalizability across the hospitality and tourism industry.

These findings contribute to understanding the "black box" by empirically validating job satisfaction as a critical mediator linking HPWS with turnover intentions and job performance (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a; Murphy *et al*., 2018). Specifically, we contribute to the literature by confirming this mediating mechanism, which remains underexplored in tourism contexts (Benítez-Núñez *et al*., 2024; Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023). Thus, we support both SET and JD-R theories as valuable frameworks to explain the relationships between HPWS, job satisfaction, and employee outcomes. In addition, we extend prior research by formally testing the effects of three differentiated HRM bundles (ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing) on turnover intentions and job performance, offering a more detailed understanding of how the internal configuration of HPWS shapes employee outcomes in tourism (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a). This disaggregated perspective enhances deepens existing knowledge by clarifying which specific bundles of HRM practices are most effective for enhancing job satisfaction, reducing turnover intentions, and improving job performance. Finally, our findings offer practical recommendations for managers aiming to create environments that satisfy employee needs, enhance performance, and improve talent retention.

2. Literature and hypotheses

2.1 Social Exchange Theory and job demands-resources theory

This study is grounded in both, the SET (Cropanzano *et al*., 2017) and the JD-R theory (Bakker *et al*., 2023). These theoretical approaches explain how HPWS influence employee attitudinal, behavioural and well-being, and therefore are used here to explain employees' job performance and turnover intentions.

On the one hand, SET (Cropanzano *et al*., 2017) suggests that employment relationships are determined by reciprocal exchanges between organizations and employees. Concretely, the reciprocity principle claims that initiating actions by organizations lead to contingent responses by employees. For example, extant studies showed that exploitative leadership decreases employee performance based on SET (Wu *et al*., 2021). However, when employees perceive support and fairness from their organization, they will reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours. Previous studies have used SET to explain positive employee outcomes driven by corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions (González-De-la-Rosa *et al*., 2023), positive leadership behaviours (Zeb *et al*., 2023) and also HPWS (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023). Therefore, HPWS should enable positive employee outcomes since they signal employees that their organizations take care of them.

On the other hand, JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) explains employee outcomes based on their well-being. The theory distinguishes between job demands, which may lead to fatigue and burnout, and job resources, which drives engagement and well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2024). The theory proposes that constant exposure to job demands initiate the health impairment process that leads to employee burnout and compromises both their well-being and performance (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023). However, this can be solved through job resources, which initiate the motivational path that leads to employee well-being and enhances their performance (Demerouti *et al*., 2001). This approach has been used to explain why some organizational practices (Topcic *et al*., 2016) or leadership styles (Huang *et al*., 2020) are associated with high stress, exhaustion and lower performance. Concerning HPWS, they have been showed to act as job resources with potential to reduce job demands (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020b), and improve employee well-being (Dorta-Afonso and Romero-Domínguez, 2025).

Consequently, SET and JD-R offer an appropriate framework to interpret the role of HPWS in shaping employee outcomes. In essence, we assume that HPWS will be a signal quality of the relationship between employees and organizations as they act as job resources to deal with demands. Together, they inform the hypotheses we develop in the following sections.

2.2 HPWS in hospitality and tourism contexts

One of the main research streams within SHRM addresses HPWS and their effects on organizational outcomes (Messersmith *et al*., 2011). HPWS typically consist of HRM practices including rigorous selection, training, results-oriented appraisal systems, and incentives (Delery and Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos *et al*., 2005). These systems aim to increase employee capabilities, motivation, and opportunities (Jiang *et al*., 2012). Researchers emphasize the benefits of adopting these practices as integrated systems rather than in isolation (Delery and Gupta, 2016).

There is a consensus that HPWS influence organizational performance by affecting employees' attitudes and behaviours, although the mediating mechanisms remain in a "black box" (Messersmith *et al*., 2011). Variations across industries are crucial when assessing HPWS outcomes (Combs *et al*., 2006; Jackson *et al*., 2014). However, empirical evidence on HPWS outcomes largely comes from the manufacturing industry (Dimple and Kuriakose, 2023; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a; Murphy *et al*., 2018), limiting their generalization to hospitality and tourism activities. Tourism firms uniquely offer services that are simultaneously produced and consumed by tourists, which highlights employee relevance and demands context-specific research (Yang *et al*., 2021).

Empirical findings in hospitality and tourism suggest that HPWS are beneficial for several employee behavioural outcomes, such as innovative behaviours (Jaiswal and Tyagi, 2019), service recovery performance (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016), and reduced turnover intentions (Karadas and Karatepe, 2018). Nevertheless, most of the empirical evidence in hospitality and tourism settings mainly supports the mediating function of work engagement (Alafeshat and Tanova, 2019; Hassan *et al*., 2025; Jaiswal and Tyagi, 2019; Karatepe, 2013a; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020c), organizational commitment (Dhar, 2015; Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2021; Karatepe, 2015; Yang, 2012) and job embeddedness (Afsar *et al*., 2018; Karatepe, 2013b; Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014).

Additionally, most available results originate from hotel employees (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2025; Huertas-Valdivia *et al*., 2018; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020c; Peethambaran and Naim, 2025; Yang *et al*., 2021). Other relevant subsectors within the tourism industry, such as restaurants and transportation services, have received comparatively less attention, despite potentially exhibiting different dynamics and employee outcomes (Murphy *et al*., 2018). Therefore, the current study addresses this gap by investigating HPWS effects across multiple subsectors within tourism. This sector-specific context reinforces the relevance of the hypotheses presented in the following sections.

2.3 The relationship between HPWS and employees' turnover intentions

Employees' turnover intentions reflect their willingness to leave their organizations, and they reliably predict actual turnover (Nadiri and Tanova, 2010). Hospitality and tourism settings are characterized by high turnover intentions due to low wages, and job dissatisfaction (Pizam and Thornburg, 2000), along with high workloads (García-Cabrera *et al*., 2018). High turnover negatively impacts organizational success through increased recruitment and training costs as well as reduced service quality.

SET explains the relationship between workers and their organizations (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) and can help understand why hospitality and tourism employees leave their jobs. Its core reciprocity principle suggests that employees' attitudes and behaviours are shaped by their perceptions of the treatment received from their employers. For example, a team leader may engage in abusive supervision displaying hostile behaviours towards their subordinates (Haar *et al*., 2016). Consequently, for the exchange to be fair for both parties, employees' intentions to leave would reasonably increase. In this sense, HPWS could be regarded as a positive initiating action carried out by one of the parties engaged in the relationship (i.e. the firm) that should be reciprocated with good attitudes and behaviours by the other party (i.e. the employee) such as being committed with their companies and therefore

not leave their jobs. HPWS may be perceived by employees as an effort by the company of building a good relationship with their workers. As such, the employee should feel obligated to pay back with positive outcomes and therefore not be willing to leave the firm.

The JD-R theory (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023) also explains this relationship. HPWS can act as organizational resources that help counter the high demands tourism employees face. According to the JD-R theory, excessive job demands initiate a health impairment process that adversely impact employee well-being in their jobs. However, job resources can decrease the negative effect of job demands and directly enhance well-being, which will in turn enhance employees' results such as their intention to leave (Knudsen *et al*., 2009). Prior research has confirmed this assumption is similar settings (Benítez-Núñez *et al*., 2024). Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. HPWS negatively relates with turnover intentions.

2.4 The relationship between HPWS and job performance

Employees' job performance can be defined as behaviour and actions aligned with organizational objectives. This individual performance is crucial in achieving positive tourist experiences, organizational goals, and a competitive advantage. Employees in the hospitality and tourism, especially front-line workers, directly interact with customers, leaving minimal room for error. They must consistently deliver high-quality services, meeting and exceeding client expectations by demonstrating exceptional effort and energy (Guidetti *et al*., 2021; Karatepe *et al*., 2006). However, as previously mentioned, hospitality and tourism positions typically involve challenging working conditions (Baum, 2015; García-Cabrera *et al*., 2018; Ladkin, 2011). Consequently, managers must identify and implement practices that positively influence employee performance.

Previous studies suggest that HPWS positively impact employee service performance (Chang and Chen, 2011; Lepak *et al*., 2006). Organizations implementing HPWS signal to employees that they are valued and considered essential assets. According to SET theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005), employees who perceive that the organization values and supports them develop a sense of obligation to reciprocate—not only by increasing commitment and remaining with the organization but also by increasing effort and therefore job performance. This increased effort results in employees being more likely to intensify their task-related behaviours, which allows them to sustain higher levels of individual performance. Thus, when HPWS are perceived as a form of organizational investment targeted at benefiting the workforce, employees are expected to put discretionary effort in their jobs ultimately improving their performance. Similarly, from the JD-R perspective, HPWS represent valuable organizational resource enabling employees to effectively manage demanding service requirements, thus alleviating job strain and promoting superior individual performance. These resources help employees cope with the high levels of job demands they face in their daily routines, therefore preventing the health impairment process that leads to burnout. Additionally, by providing job resources in the form of autonomy, training or feedback, HPWS potentially activates the motivational path that increases employee performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2024). Building on these theoretical foundations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. HPWS is positively associated with employees' job performance.

2.5 The mediational role of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is described as a positive attitude towards one's job (Locke, 1969). Employees experiencing high job satisfaction are more likely to remain in their organizations and demonstrate higher performance. Research has extensively explored job satisfaction, clarifying its outcomes and predictors (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2025; García-Rodríguez *et al*.,

2020; Lee *et al*., 2015; Nadiri and Tanova, 2010). Nonetheless, a review of the literature revealed that job satisfaction's mediating potential is currently capturing the attention of researchers (Kong *et al*., 2018). However, studies specifically addressing the mediating role of job satisfaction between HPWS and employee outcomes remain limited (Benítez-Núñez *et al*., 2024; Page *et al*., 2018), suggesting this underexplored area needs further investigation. From the lenses of our theoretical framework, job satisfaction may very well act as a mediator between HPWS and our criterion variables. According to SET, when HPWS are perceived as a sign that organizations take care of their employees and value their contributions, employees will develop favourable attitudinal responses (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). One of those, may be job satisfaction, which can serve as a precursor to further outcomes such as turnover intentions and performance. In parallel, the JD-R theory considers job satisfaction as a psychological state resulting from the availability of resources to counter job demands. HPWS provide such resources in the form of abilities, motivation and opportunities to perform. Thus, job satisfaction may reflect the presence of sufficient resources and help explain why HPWS reduce turnover intentions and foster improved performance.

Despite its importance, few studies have proposed job satisfaction as a mediator between HPWS and employee outcomes. Page *et al*. (2018) failed to support the hypothesis that HPWS increased job satisfaction, however, they did provided evidence of a negative connection between job satisfaction and intentions to leave an organization, although the mediation hypothesis was not formally tested. Dorta-Afonso *et al*. (2023), in their research involving hotel workers, showed that HPWS would contribute to enhanced job satisfaction, partly because of reduced burnout. Several studies demonstrated the mediating role of job satisfaction between certain characteristics of a position and turnover intentions (Ferreira *et al*., 2017). These studies suggest that when hospitality and tourism employees perceive their job conditions positively—due in part to supportive organizational practices—they experience greater satisfaction, thus reducing their turnover intentions. Previous research supports the notion that HPWS provide essential organizational resources that improve job satisfaction, which in turn reduces turnover intentions (Khoreva and Wechtler, 2018). Building on these findings, and the theoretical rationale outlined above, we propose:

H3. HPWS will be negatively associated with turnover intentions, partly because they are linked to increased levels of job satisfaction.

Karatepe (2013a) suggested that HPWS improve hotel employees' performance by increasing employee engagement. Few studies have explored the mediating role of job satisfaction between HPWS and employee performance in tourism and hospitality. Meta analyses have long confirmed job satisfaction's positive impact on performance (Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985), although some studies suggest this relationship might not directly affect hotels' financial outcomes (Chi and Gursoy, 2009; Kim *et al*., 2013). Satisfied employees generally deliver higher quality services, exerting additional efforts and improve overall organizational performance. For instance, a highly satisfied restaurant waiter is more likely to exhibit positive work attitudes, provide high-quality service, and achieve superior job performance. Conversely, a dissatisfied waiter may display negative behaviours towards customers, leading to lower service quality and diminished job performance. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. HPWS will be positively associated with job performance, partly because they are linked to increased levels of job satisfaction.

2.6 Differential effects of ability-, motivation- and opportunity-enhancing bundles

While HPWS are commonly conceptualized as integrated systems, research highlights the value of disaggregating these systems into their core functional dimensions: ability-, motivation-, and opportunity-enhancing (AMO) bundles (Jiang *et al*., 2012). The ability-

enhancing bundle is focused on attracting and improving employee skills (e.g. rigorous selection and training). The motivation-enhancing bundle is aimed at converting skills into discretionary effort (e.g. job security, incentives) and the opportunity-enhancing bundle empower employees giving them autonomy and voice within their organizations (e.g. participation in decision-making, job enrichment).

Research to date on the tourism contexts from the AMO bundles point of view is still limited with some exceptions (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020c). Few studies conducted to date showed that such bundles act differently over employee outcomes in the form of attitudes and behaviours. For example, Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020c) found that all three bundles of HPWS were positively related with justice and service climates in their sample of hotel employees. Dorta-Afonso *et al*. (2023) found that whereas the A-bundle increased job satisfaction directly, the M- and O-bundle showed indirect effects through burnout reduction. More recently, Romero-Domínguez *et al*. (2025) showed differential effects of AMO bundles on job satisfaction depending on employees' gender. Based on previous empirical evidence, it is reasonable to expect that distinct components of HPWS will exert different effects on employee outcomes. Consequently, the following hypothesis is submitted:

H5. ability-enhancing, motivation-enhancing and opportunity-enhancing bundles of HPWS differently impact employee outcomes.

Figure 1 captures the research model in which HPWS directly relates with employee outcomes (i.e. job performance and turnover intention) and the mediating role of job satisfaction between those variables. Additionally, we expect a differential functioning of AMO bundles on their relationship with employees' job satisfaction, performance and turnover intentions.

3. Method

3.1 Sampling and data collection process

We followed a convenience sampling method between March and July 2021. A team of research assistants carried out the data collection by visiting and contacting tourism enterprises in the Canary Islands (a leading global tourism destination located in Spain). The Canary Islands constitute one of Spain's most prominent tourism regions and are recognized as a significant destination within the European tourism market, offering an ideal context for exploring employee behaviours within diverse tourism subsectors. The sample comprised 417 employees (59.2% female) who completed a paper-and-pencil survey. Participants worked in hotels (55.2%), restaurants (22.5%) and car rental offices (22.3%). Representativeness was ensured by selecting firms from different tourism subsectors (hotels, restaurants, car rental

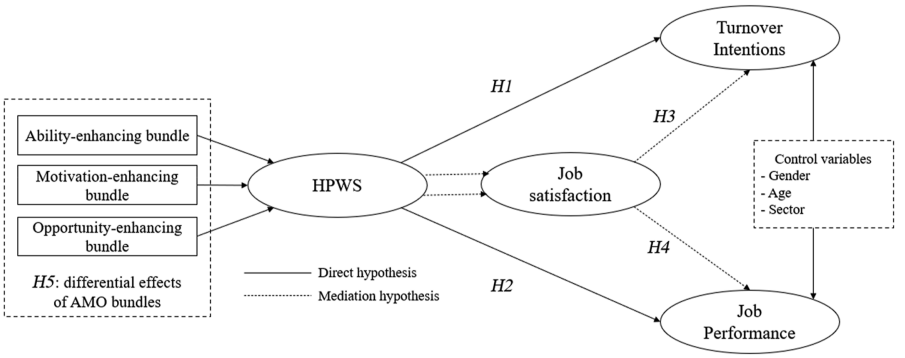

Figure 1. Research model. Sources: Authors' own work

offices), reflecting the main tourism services. Voluntary participation and anonymity were explicitly assured to all respondents to reduce potential biases in responses.

3.2 Common method variance (CMV)

Following Podsakoff *et al*. (2003), procedural and statistical measures were implemented to mitigate Common method variance (CMV). Controlling for CMV is important given that both dependent and independent variables were collected from the same source in a single wave. Procedurally, participant confidentiality and anonymity were assured, validated scales were used, and complex language was avoided. Statistically, a full collinearity test confirmed that all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 3 (Kock, 2015), suggesting CMV was not a significant concern in our study.

3.3 Measurement of variables

The questionnaire was developed by researchers experienced in HRM and organizational behaviour, ensuring content validity. Measures were derived from established literature to align with research objectives. *HPWS* comprised 20 items measuring seven HRM practices drawn from previous literature, all showing acceptable reliabilities: training and development (TRA) ($\alpha = 0.79$), performance management (PMA) ($\alpha = 0.70$), incentives and rewards (INC) ($\alpha = 0.50$) (Sun *et al*., 2007), recruitment and selection (REC) ($\alpha = 0.78$) (Zacharatos *et al*., 2005), job design (DES) ($\alpha = 0.78$), employment security (SEC) ($\alpha = 0.66$), and participation in decision-making (DEC) ($\alpha = 0.80$) (Delery and Doty, 1996). This combination was developed by Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020c) adapting items from the aforementioned scales, with an overall reliability of $\alpha = 0.937$ in their study. Additionally, it has been used in other related research on HPWS (e.g. Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023). Participants rated their agreement with statements about workplace HRM practices.

Job satisfaction (SAT) was measured with 3 adapted items ($\alpha = 0.83$, Suazo, 2009), e.g. "In general, I like working here".

Turnover intentions (QUIT) were assessed using four items ($\alpha = 0.87$, Karatepe *et al*., 2006), e.g. "Often I think about leaving this organization".

Job performance (PER) was evaluated with two items ($\alpha > 0.70$; Grobelna, 2019), e.g. "Compared to other employees in the industry, I do a good job" and "Compared to other employees in this company, my work is excellent".

Control variables included gender of employees, age, and employment sector (hotel, restaurants, and car rental offices).

3.4 Statistical analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test our hypotheses, as this software is very popular among empirical research in HRM studies (Ringle *et al*., 2020). Other reasons for using PLS-SEM, include: (1) the research model included both reflective (turnover intention, job satisfaction, job performance) and formative constructs (HPWSs); (2) this technique is appropriate for both small and large sample sizes; (3) this method performs well with non-normally distributed data.

With G*Power 3.3, we assessed the minimum sample size required. An *a priori* test was conducted with parameters suggested by the literature concerning effect size and power (Cohen, 1988; Faul *et al*., 2007). We introduced eleven predictors considering the seven dimensions of HPWS, the mediator, and the three control variables. The minimum requirement was 123 cases, while our total sample involved 417 respondents, clearly meeting the necessary size.

4. Results

Analysis done with PLS-SEM involves two stages: assessment of outer and the inner models (Hair *et al*., 2017). However, since HPWS is second-order reflective-formative construct, the

total number of items differs between stages. Thus, we followed the two-step approach recommended by Wright *et al*. (2012).

4.1 Outer model assessment

Prior to hypothesis testing, we conducted Harman's single-factor test to assess common method bias (CMB). The variance explained by a single factor was below the recommended threshold of 50%, indicating that CMB is unlikely to be a significant concern. The validation of the first-order model, having all reflective constructs, was conducted. Indicator and internal consistency reliability were evaluated at both item and construct level (Hair *et al*., 2021). The loadings of indicators were all above 0.708 for each construct (see Table 1), confirming reliability. Internal consistency was assessed using both composite reliability (CR) and rho_A. All CR and rho_A values exceeded the threshold value of 0.708 (Hair *et al*., 2021), indicating adequate internal consistency. Convergent validity was confirmed by the average variance extracted (AVE) values, which were all above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair *et al*., 2021).

Discriminant validity was measured using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell and Larcker criterion (see Table 2). All HTMT values (above the diagonal in Table 2) were below the 0.85 threshold, indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Henseler *et al*., 2015). Similarly, Fornell and Larcker criteria (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), based on the square root (diagonal value in bold) of AVE being higher than the correlations with the other variables, also confirmed discriminant validity.

A second-order model was generated using the two-step approach: initially, the items from each HPWS dimension were grouped, listed as latent variables, and the resulting scores were used as indicators for HPWS (Wright *et al*., 2012). For validating this second-order formative construct, we examined VIF values of HPWS dimensions, which were all below the recommended threshold value 3, indicating no collinearity problems (see Table 3).

Next, we examined the weights and loadings of HPWS dimensions. The weights of PER, DEC, TRA, and INC were not significant. Following Hair *et al*. (2017), we assessed individual loading of these dimensions. All loadings, except for INC, were higher than 0.5, thus justifying their retention. The incentive and rewards dimension, despite a lower loading (0.437), was retained due to its significant loading ($p < 0.01$), thereby ensuring content validity.

4.2 Assessment of the structural (inner) model

First, the VIF values were assessed, all being below 3, confirming that there was no collinearity issue. After running a 10,000-sample bootstrapping routine, we proceeded to test our hypotheses (see Table 4).

Results confirmed that HPWS had a direct and negative association with employees' intention to leave ($\beta = -0.314$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H1. In contrast, HPWS did not have a significant direct effect on job performance ($\beta = -0.037$, $p = 0.54$), therefore H2 was not supported. However, the total effect of HPWS on job performance became significant ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.01$) due to the mediating role of job satisfaction. Following Nitzl *et al*. (2016), job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between HPWS and turnover intentions ($\beta = -0.110$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H3. This partial mediation suggests that HPWS may exert direct influences on turnover intentions that are independent of job satisfaction, indicating potential additional mechanisms not explored in this research. In addition, job satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between HPWS and job performance ($\beta = 0.210$, $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H4. Meanwhile, HPWS effects on job performance occur solely through job satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of job satisfaction in activating HPWS potential benefits. Therefore, no direct relationship between HPWS and performance was observed, only an indirect one through job satisfaction.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity of the first-order model

Construct	Indicator	Load	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	AVE
HPWS	*Recruitment and selection (REC)*		0.926	0.927	0.819
	HPWS_1	0.910***			
	HPWS_2	0.859***			
	HPWS_3	0.923***			
	HPWS_4	0.926***			
	Training (TRA)		0.910	0.927	0.848
	HPWS_5	0.938***			
	HPWS_6	0.914***			
	HPWS_7	0.910***			
	Security (SEC)		0.772	0.794	0.684
	HPWS_8	0.851***			
	HPWS_9	0.778***			
	HPWS_10	0.851***			
	Performance management (PMA)		0.909	0.913	0.845
	HPWS_11	0.911***			
	HPWS_12	0.926***			
	HPWS_13	0.922***			
	Incentives and rewards (INC)		0.840	0.841	0.862
	HPWS_14	0.925***			
	HPWS_15	0.932***			
	Participation in decision-making (DEC)		0.861	0.865	0.878
	HPWS_16	0.942***			
	HPWS_17	0.933***			
	Job design (DES)		0.907	0.916	0.843
	HPWS_18	0.917***			
	HPWS_19	0.940***			
	HPWS_20	0.897***			
Job Satisfaction (SAT)			0.879	0.890	0.805
	SAT_1	0.915***			
	SAT_2	0.871***			
	SAT_3	0.905***			
Turnover Intentions (QUIT)			0.866	0.885	0.715
	QUIT_1	0.861***			
	QUIT_2	0.746***			
	QUIT_3	0.866***			
	QUIT_4	0.900***			
Job Performance (PER)			0.755	0.790	0.801
	Performance_1	0.923***			
	Performance_2	0.866***			

Source(s): Authors' own work

Additionally, we tested whether different bundles of HRM practices within HPWS exerted distinct effects on employee outcomes, based on the AMO framework (Jiang *et al.*, 2012), as proposed on our fifth hypothesis.

In essence, our results (see Table 5) provide additional information. From a systems approach, HPWS reduced turnover intentions both directly and indirectly via job satisfaction. However, the bundle approach showed that the O bundle directly reduces turnover intentions ($\beta = 0.359$, $p < 0.01$), whereas the A bundle showed an indirect significant effect through job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.063$, $p = 0.01$). Both, the A and O bundles indirectly improved job performance through job satisfaction (A → SAT → PER: $\beta = 0.109$, $p < 0.01$; O → SAT → PER: $\beta = 0.035$, $p < 0.05$). The M bundle had no significant effects on employee outcomes (see Table 5). Consequently, our hypothesis 5 received support.

Table 2. Discriminant validity of the first-order model

Discriminant validity	PER	DES	DEC	PMA	INC	SAT	SEC	REC	TRA	QUIT
PER	0.895	*0.159*	*0.111*	*0.143*	*0.078*	*0.506*	*0.262*	*0.148*	*0.124*	*0.073*
DES	0.138	0.918	*0.701*	*0.779*	*0.487*	*0.462*	*0.718*	*0.686*	*0.596*	*0.454*
DEC	0.096	0.619	0.937	*0.747*	*0.576*	*0.430*	*0.814*	*0.759*	*0.591*	*0.341*
PMA	0.127	0.707	0.662	0.919	*0.565*	*0.462*	*0.739*	*0.743*	*0.683*	*0.350*
INC	0.066	0.424	0.489	0.494	0.928	*0.263*	*0.584*	*0.430*	*0.477*	*0.201*
SAT	0.416	0.424	0.378	0.420	0.232	0.897	*0.475*	*0.497*	*0.408*	*0.434*
SEC	0.207	0.618	0.670	0.638	0.470	0.405	0.827	0.750	0.639	0.406
REC	0.135	0.631	0.677	0.685	0.382	0.454	0.644	0.905	*0.747*	*0.380*
TRA	0.088	0.544	0.525	0.626	0.419	0.374	0.544	0.690	0.921	*0.296*
QUIT	0.037	−0.411	−0.299	−0.317	−0.174	−0.392	−0.343	−0.346	−0.266	0.845

Note(s): Diagonal elements (in underlined) refer to the square root of the AVE. Elements below the diagonal correspond to the correlations between constructs. Elements above the diagonal (in italics) are the HTMT values

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 3. Validation of the second-order model

Constructs	Dimensions	Loadings	Weights	VIF
HPWSs	DEC	0.721	-0.053^{ns}	1.760
	INC	0.437^{**}	-0.067^{ns}	1.419
	DES	0.892	0.466^{**}	1.919
	PMA	0.796	0.065^{ns}	2.379
	REC	0.863	0.359^{**}	2.237
	SEC	0.836	0.332^{**}	1.893
	TRA	0.685	0.018^{ns}	1.653

Note(s): $n = 10{,}000$ subsamples; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; ^{ns} non-significant

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 4. Hypothesis testing

	Original sample (O)	*t*-statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*-values
Total Effects			
HPWS → PER	0.174	2.991	0.003
HPWS → QUIT	−0.424	9.650	0.000
Direct Effects			
HPWS → PER	−0.037	0.619	0.536
HPWS → QUIT	−0.314	5.683	0.000
Indirect Effects			
HPWS → SAT → QUIT	−0.110	3.477	0.001
HPWS → SAT → PER	0.210	6.879	0.000

Source(s): Authors' own work

4.3 Supplementary analysis

To achieve greater generalizability, several authors have stressed the importance of testing whether results hold true in sectors beyond hotels (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2021; Jaiswal and Tyagi, 2019).

Table 5. AMO bundles approach

	Original sample (O)	*t*-statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*-values
Total Effects			
A → PER	0.024	0.318	0.750
A → QUIT	−0.099	1.525	0.127
M → PER	0.147	1.723	0.085
M → QUIT	−0.010	0.115	0.908
O → PER	0.009	0.111	0.912
O → QUIT	−0.324	4.102	0.000
Direct Effects			
A → PER	−0.086	1.244	0.214
A → QUIT	−0.036	0.567	0.571
M → PER	0.112	1.297	0.195
M → QUIT	0.010	0.130	0.897
O → PER	−0.091	1.136	0.256
O → QUIT	−0.266	3.367	0.001
Indirect Effects			
A → SAT → QUIT	−0.063	2.897	0.004
A → SAT → PER	0.109	3.521	0.000
M → SAT → QUIT	−0.020	1.051	0.293
M → SAT → PER	0.035	1.094	0.274
O → SAT → QUIT	−0.058	2.490	0.013
O → SAT → PER	0.100	2.901	0.004

Note(s): A, M, and O refer to ability-, motivation-, and opportunity-enhancing bundles of HRM practices
Source(s): Authors' own work

Consequently, although it was not part of the research hypotheses, we further investigated whether the results differed depending on the subsector (hotel, restaurants and car rental offices) to which the surveyed employees belonged. We performed measured invariance of composites (MICOM) analysis following guidelines from the literature (Henseler *et al*., 2016; Sarstedt *et al*., 2011). First, configural invariance was established by ensuring consistent algorithms, items and scales across the three sectors.

Second, compositional invariance was established, as the permutation correlations closely matched the original correlation and fell within the acceptable confidence interval (see Table 6). Finally, mean and variance invariance was assessed and confirmed since differences across the three sectors were statistically insignificant at the 5% level, thereby supporting

Table 6. MICOM analysis

	Original correlation for sector 1 and 2	Permutation *p*-value	Original correlation for sector 1 and 3	Permutation *p*-value	Original correlation for sector 2 and 3	Permutation *p*-value
HPWS	0.995	0.112	0.995	0.096	0.997	0.150
PER	0.990	0.136	0.999	0.677	0.995	0.523
SAT	1.000	0.986	1.000	0.473	1.000	0.664
QUIT	0.997	0.337	0.997	0.365	0.997	0.182

Source(s): Authors' own work

measurement invariance. Thus, full invariance was established, allowing us to perform a multi-group analysis (MGA). The MGA results revealed no significant differences among subsectors (see Table 7).

5. Discussion

This research examined the effect of HPWS on employees' turnover intentions and job performance in the tourism sector. We also explored the mediating role of job satisfaction in these relationships. Our findings provide empirical support highlighting job satisfaction as a critical mediator linking HPWS with employee outcomes, clarifying a previously underexplored relationship. Moreover, we corroborated that our findings were consistent across different tourism subsectors, demonstrating the robustness and potential generalizability of these relationships within the broader tourism industry. Furthermore, our supplementary analyses applying the AMO framework provided deeper understanding of the specific bundles that contribute to turnover reduction and performance improvement via job satisfaction.

5.1 Theoretical implications

Our findings confirm previous research indicating that HPWS contribute significantly to reducing employees' turnover intentions, thus enhancing employee retention in tourism organizations (Karadas and Karatepe, 2018; Karatepe, 2013b; Page *et al*., 2018; Wong *et al*., 2019). This study contributes to the generalizability of prior findings, as it encompasses multiple tourism subsectors (i.e. hotels, restaurants, and car rental offices) rather than focusing exclusively on hotels. Previous studies have highlighted emotional exhaustion (Wong *et al*., 2019), job embeddedness (Afsar *et al*., 2018), and engagement (Karadas and Karatepe, 2018) as mediators between HPWS and turnover intentions. We extend this theoretical framework by empirically identifying job satisfaction as an additional, significant mediator.

Regarding employees' actual behaviours, our findings align with prior research that identified HPWS as a predictor of innovative behaviours (Dhar, 2015; Jaiswal and Tyagi, 2019), extra-role behaviours (Safavi and Karatepe, 2018), creative performance (Karadas and Karatepe, 2018; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016), service recovery performance (Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014), and overall job performance (Karatepe, 2015). Interestingly, we did not find a significant direct association between HPWS and job performance, contrasting with prior findings (Karatepe, 2015). Instead, our results highlight that job satisfaction fully mediates this relationship, indicating that achieving high employee satisfaction is essential to realize HPWS benefits on performance. While previous studies emphasized work engagement and organizational commitment as mediators between HPWS and job performance (Karatepe, 2013a, 2015), we extend existing literature by empirically validating the mediating role of job satisfaction between HPWS and job performance.

Table 7. Multi-group analysis

	Difference (Sec1 – Sec2)	*p*-value	Difference (Sec1 – Sec3)	*p*-value	Difference (Sec2 – Sec3)	*p*-value
HPWS → PER	−0.084	0.490	−0.259	0.144	−0.175	0.384
HPWS → SAT	−0.199	0.062	−0.202	0.038	−0.002	0.992
HPWS → QUIT	−0.063	0.570	0.137	0.285	0.200	0.165
SAT → PER	0.167	0.186	0.294	0.108	0.126	0.547
SAT → QUIT	0.186	0.182	0.134	0.329	−0.052	0.741

Source(s): Authors' own work

Exploring mediating mechanisms underlying the HPWS–outcome relationships has been a recurrent call in the literature (Karadas and Karatepe, 2018; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a). Most empirical studies in hospitality and tourism contexts have predominantly focused on work engagement as a mediator (Jaiswal and Tyagi, 2019; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020b), whereas job satisfaction has received comparatively less attention (Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2021; Benítez-Núñez *et al*., 2024). Previous studies in hospitality and tourism primarily considered job satisfaction as an outcome variable (Alafeshat and Tanova, 2019; Dorta-Afonso *et al*., 2023). Our study provides novel empirical evidence highlighting job satisfaction's mediating role, directly addressing calls for deeper exploration of HPWS mediating mechanisms. Specifically, our findings expand existing literature by empirically demonstrating that the mediating role of job satisfaction is robust across different subsectors within tourism, contributing to greater generalizability and a clearer understanding of boundary conditions.

Our findings contribute to the AMO framework application in tourism contexts, demonstrating the distinct roles that HRM bundles play. Specifically, the direct effect of the opportunity-enhancing bundle on turnover intentions aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of empowering human resource practices (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020b). Additionally, we confirm that both SET and JD-R theories remain appropriate conceptual frameworks for understanding the relationship between HPWS and behavioural outcomes via job satisfaction. In line with SET, HPWS may be perceived as an organizational effort to build lasting relationships with employees, reciprocated by increased commitment and performance (Cropanzano *et al*., 2017). Similarly, according to JD-R theory, HPWS function as resources that alleviate job demands (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023), enhancing job satisfaction and subsequently leading to positive employee outcomes. Moreover, our findings support a differentiated effect of AMO bundles, confirming that opportunity- and ability-enhancing practices significantly influence employee outcomes via job satisfaction, while motivation-enhancing practices did not show significant effects in this context.

5.2 Managerial recommendations

From a managerial perspective, we recommend that tourism managers invest in implementing HPWS, as these systems enhance employee job satisfaction, ultimately reducing turnover and improving performance. However, our findings should be interpreted with caution, considering the ongoing debate regarding mutual gains and conflicting outcomes perspectives (Van De Voorde *et al*., 2012). The mutual gains perspective suggests that HPWS can simultaneously benefit firms and employees, creating a win-win scenario. Managers in the tourism industry should focus specifically on practices within the ability- and opportunity-enhancing bundles, such as rigorous selection, training, and employee participation in decision-making, as these showed significant impacts on both turnover reduction and performance enhancement through job satisfaction. In practice, organizations can implement onboarding processes and continuous professional development plans that not only increase employee skills but also communicate a long-term commitment to their growth (i.e. ability-enhancing bundle). Similarly, establishing formal channels for employee voice, such as suggestion platforms or participatory meetings, is a way in which employees can contribute to decision-making (i.e. opportunity-enhancing bundle).

Conversely, the conflicting outcomes perspective warns that improved organizational performance might come at the cost of employee well-being. In practice, this may relate to our results concerning the motivation-enhancing bundle, which showed no significant effects on turnover reduction, job satisfaction or job performance. A plausible recommendation is that managers should not rely solely on monetary incentives but should complement them with other forms of recognition that may positively influence employee outcomes. Alternatively, it may be the case that the motivation-enhancing bundle affects other employee variables not covered in this study.

Our findings align with the mutual gains perspective, demonstrating that HPWS positively influence job satisfaction. However, some previous studies did not consistently support this relationship (e.g. Page *et al*., 2018). These inconsistencies place the focus over the importance of how HPWS are implemented and perceived by employees. Thus, organizations should carefully implement HPWS with genuine concern for employee well-being, as the effectiveness of these practices depends heavily on how they are applied. Managers should develop communication skills and provide training to properly convey the purpose behind HPWS practices to employees, ensuring that these are perceived as beneficial rather than exploitative (Katou, 2022). Effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering employee trust and ensuring that HPWS are perceived as authentic developmental initiatives rather than mechanisms focused solely on performance extraction. Additionally, managers must proactively address practical constraints such as resource availability, managerial commitment, and potential employee resistance to ensure successful HPWS implementation.

5.3 Research limitations and avenues of future inquiry

This study is among the first to provide results from a diverse sample across multiple subsectors within tourism. While we included key services (accommodation, meals, and transportation), other tourism-related organizations such as travel agencies or entertainment services were not included. Therefore, future studies should replicate these findings across broader contexts to enhance generalizability.

Moreover, literature indicates that perceptions of organizational realities significantly differ across hierarchical levels (Lee *et al*., 2015). Thus, future research should investigate whether hierarchical positions (e.g. managers vs. front-line employees) moderate the relationships between HPWS and outcomes (Andersén and Andersén, 2019).

Despite decomposing HPWS into AMO bundles (Jiang *et al*., 2012), this approach remains underexplored in tourism research (Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020a). Thus, future research should investigate potential synergistic effects of combining HRM bundles on employee outcomes (Bello-Pintado, 2015). Additionally, future studies should explore potential interactions between HPWS and individual-level resources (e.g. autonomy, self-efficacy, free time), following recent expansions of JD-R theory (Demerouti and Bakker, 2023; Wattoo *et al*., 2020).

Finally, although we identified job satisfaction as a mediator, research on moderators in hospitality and tourism settings remains limited (Teo *et al*., 2020; Wong *et al*., 2019). Future studies should incorporate moderators to deepen the understanding of conditions under which HPWS exert stronger effects on outcomes. Specifically, variables such as POS (Chillakuri and Vanka, 2020) or perceived supervisor support (Liu *et al*., 2019) could be promising avenues for future research in this field.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, our research highlights the importance of HPWS for enhancing employee retention and performance across tourism firms. Specifically, we contribute novel empirical evidence that helps open the “black box” by empirically confirming the mediating role of job satisfaction. Thus, HPWS implementation is fundamental to achieving organizational goals through its impact on employee satisfaction.

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