

## **High Commitment Work System and Turnover Intentions: Role of Workload as a Mediator**

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**Abstract:** Turnover of employees is a big challenge for nearly every organization. Whereas, HR related policies and practices have huge impact on turnover intentions (TI) of employees in many contexts as such policies impact the attachment of the employees with the organization by enhancing their organizational commitment levels and thus leading to a considerable attention towards high commitment work-system (HCWS). The main aim of this study is to explore the relationship between HCWS and TI of employees, with the role of workload as a mediator between HCWS and TI of employees. This study is a descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional and quantitative where survey approach was used by focusing on employees, selected through convenience sampling approach, in banking sector (both public and private sector banks in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Correlation, OLS regression analysis, Cronbach's alpha, and KMO and Bartlett's tests were used for data analysis purposes. Results show the significant positive relationship between the HCWS and TI of employees, while the role of workload as a mediator variable between the HCWS and TI of employees was also confirmed. This study is important one as it extends the understanding through contributing to the literature related to employees' TI and HCWS in the context of banking sector of Pakistan. Future study should focus on other study setting with longitudinal approach.

**Keywords:** High commitment work system, Organizational commitment, Workload, Turnover Intention, Banking Sector, Pakistan.

### **1. Introduction**

Organizations in Pakistan are facing multifaceted challenges, including the challenge of keeping committed Human Resource (HR) in the organizations. Nasurdin, Ling, and Khan (2018) defined the turnover intention of the employee as the course by which employee attempt to leave their current organizations in search of a better employment opportunity somewhere else, and subsequently the organization substitutes such employees with new employees that cost them heavy in terms of financial resources, training and development expenditures, better and trained employees and other related costs and consequences as well. While, many studies explained the consequences of employee turnover, its' determinants and factors. According to De-Miguel-Guzma, Garci, and Sa (2018), cost of losing an existing worker and replacing him/her with a new worker (i.e., re-hiring cost) is much higher, so companies and organizations try to devise plans for creating and enhancing employees' organizational commitment (OC) towards their jobs and organizations. While, the concept of OC has three components labelled as affective, normative and continuance commitment that are described as, "(a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) a define desire to maintain organizational membership" Jacobs, Hellman, Markowitz, and Wuest (2018). While, regarding workload, Jacobs et al. (2018) stated that, "it as the perceived relationship between the amount of mental processing capability or resources and the amount required by the task". Researchers (e.g., Liu, Chow, Zhu, and Chen (2020)) explained that how employees perceive workload and its effects on their productivity, performance, well-being and health,

may have some serious impact on their turnover intentions and on HCWS of the organizations as well. [Kertiriasih, Ni, and Rupadi \(2018\)](#) explained that the greater intensity on employee perceived high commitment work practices renders the long-term retention of employees within the organization. Many authors (e.g., [\(Kertiriasih et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2020\)](#)) stated that how employee perceives workload, may have some impact on high commitment work system and employee's job turnover. Moreover, some researchers (e.g., [\(De Reuver, Van De Voorde, & Kilroy, 2019; Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016\)](#)) suggested the inclusion of some other factors (e.g., workload, pay) to explore the relationship focusing workload as a variable. Although, few studies (e.g., [Rubel and Kee \(2015\)](#)) examined the said relationship in western context focusing on different industries and organizations, but the studies conducted in the non-western context and focusing on banking sector employees remained understudied. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore and empirically examine the relationship between HCWS and TI of employees, and by considering the role of workload as a mediator between HCWS and TI of employees by considering the employees in financial sector (i.e., banks) in Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Turnover Intention

[Bindu and Srikanth \(2019\)](#) defined turnover intention as, “the measurement of whether a business or organization's employee plan to leave their positions or whether that organization plans to remove employee from positions.” Although, it is major challenge being faced by the organizations around the globe, but it is more critical challenge for organization in Pakistan. As the employees' intent to leave their organizations directly influence the turnover process and decisions thereof. Some studies have explored how human resource practices have an impact on TI of employees and their attachment towards their organizations and their jobs (e.g., [Bindu and Srikanth \(2019\); Zungbey, Bonsu, Ntow, and Sokro \(2019\)](#)) suggested that proper attention should also be given to both (a) activities, policies and actions of the management and the organizations, and (b) well-being, care and work-family balancing programs for the employees, as such will enable them to better understand the outcomes and results related to high commitment work systems and their overall impacts on the employees. Some studies suggested to include some other variables to explore the relationship between high commitment work systems and turnover intentions of employees ([Zungbey et al., 2019](#)), therefore, this study in the context of non-western perspective focused on workload as a mediator variable between high commitment work systems and turnover intentions of employees in financial sector (i.e., banks operating in both private and public sector domain) in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. In the present study, turnover intention has been considered as a dependent variable, and is operationalized as defined by [Tett and Meyer \(1993\)](#) as, “a conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization” (as cited in [Lu, Liu, and Zhao \(2017\)](#)).

### 2.2. High Commitment Work System (HCWS)

HCWS participates in the organizations' long-term competitive advantage by developing valuable, important and competitive human resources through the provision of behavioral perspectives. HCWS is commonly found through following these common practices: (1) Enriched job design, (2) Team-based approach, (3) Participation in decision-making, (4) Performance based pay, (5) Increased pay, (6) accurately appraised performance methods, (7) Extensive training, and (8) Development & selective staffing. While, to [Lin and Liu \(2019\)](#) “the conceptual and empirical understanding of HCWS includes a bundle of internally consistent HR practices, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training, compensation management, developmental performance appraisal, internal promotion, team-based work and employee participation”. Furthermore, related and selective training & development sessions and programs to increase and improve the employees' skills, abilities, professional knowledge, capabilities, human skills, and job involvement will result in improved organizational efficiency, profitability, productivity and commitment, thus resulting in less turnover of employees, thus, positively influencing human capital in the organizations ([Lu et al., 2017; Zhang, Liu, Zhang, Xu, & Cheung, 2020](#)). Because,

all of such HR related practices and programs are designed in such a way that positively influence the performance of the employees by creating and enhancing their commitment towards their organizations and jobs, through motivating and empowering them, and such results in high commitment work system (Lin & Liu, 2019). While, for the present study, HCWS is considered as independent variable, that as per (Dessler, 2017) is a set of practices basing on policies that consider high level of attachment of the employees with the organization and thus considerably higher performance of the employee by showing a higher level of organizational commitment.

### 2.3. Workload

There is no widely accepted definition of workload as different researchers and authors defined it in different ways. Hart and Staveland (1988) describe workload as, “the perceived relationship between the amount of mental processing capability or resources and the amount required by the task.” Another definition is that it represents the relationship between a group or individual human operator and task demands. But, in simpler terms, it is the volume of work expected of a person. According to Wickens (1984) “the main objective of assessing and predicting workload is to achieve evenly distributed, manageable workload and to avoid overload or underload.” While, to Jacobs, Hellman, Markowitz, and Wuest (2013) “It can be measured in terms of many factors such as the amount of work accomplished over a period of time (number of hours worked or the number of assignments in a course), level of production, or the physical or cognitive demands of the work being performed (working with a person who speaks a different language than your own).” According to Joarder et al. (2020) workload is employer’s extra work requirements from his employee in the organizational context. While, Chen (2019) divided the workload into two categories: (a) qualitative workload which is an employee’s perception that his capabilities are unable or insufficient to perform a specific work in specific period of time and (b) quantitative workload that occurs due to the excessive work. Further, an important association among employee’s job stressors likes workload, long working hours, and job enactment general work pressure, performance pressures, expressive exhaustion, and job preference. To Allen, Armstrong, Reid, and Riemenschneider (2008) workload can be considered as the gap between the capabilities of a worker and capabilities needed to accomplish the job as the employee perceive workload is difference between the employee capabilities and work assigned to him or her in a given context. The present study considers the employee perceived workload as follows: (1) Requirement of mental and perceptual activity to complete a procedure, (2) Requirement of physical activity to complete a procedure, (3) Extent of pressure due to rate and pace of procedure, (4) Mental and physical hard work to perform and learn procedures and (5) Presence of discourage, stress, irritation and anxiety.

### 2.3. HCWS and TI

High commitment work systems and practices are significantly related with job performance and employee behavior (Chen, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). Many researchers (e.g., (Alserhan & Shbail, 2020; Dessler, 2017; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004)) stated that commitment based human resource factors play a significant role and important functions for motivating the employees to remain in the organizations and keep delivering their best performance, motivation, commitment and loyalty to the organization and the job, as it will enable the organization to achieve its’ objectives and competitive advantage, because being valuable and productive members of the organizations through performing their jobs, duties and functions in fair, efficient and productive way is two way mutually beneficial reciprocal process where both the organizations and the employees get benefit. Similarly, Nawafleh and Alsafadi (2020) stated that high commitment work system significantly relates to the employees’ turnover intentions and such system, on the overall, either motivates to remain or encourages to exit the organization and the job. As per Chiang et al. (2015 as cited in Nawafleh and Alsafadi (2020)), “High commitment work system (HCWS) is one of the structure of human resource management practices in support, motivation, sustainability and creativity of employees, and contributes to improving organizational citizenship behavior. This is done through methods such as training, internal work,

compensation, evaluation, participation management, and emphasis on teamwork". Such clearly shows the strategic importance of such system for both the organizations and the employees. Furthermore, it is stated that HCWS and high commitment work practices result in mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships in both the long and short term for the employees and the organizations as well. As high commitment work system positively and significantly relates to positive human resource outcomes and results but have negative relationships with turnover intentions of the employees. Moreover, many researchers (e.g., (Nawafleh & Alsafadi, 2020; Suifan, 2015)) also showed the positive relationship of the commitment-based human resource practices on the organizational commitment and negative relationship on the turnover intentions of the employees. But, in the context of Pakistan, such results need to be validated, and this study attempts to validate such results in the context of Pakistan by focusing on the employees of financial sector.

#### 2.4. Main Objective

The aim of this study is to explore and examine the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees, and also considers workload as a mediator variable between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees, by focusing on the employees in banks.

#### 2.5. Sub-Objectives

The specific objectives are as follows:

- To empirically examine the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees.
- To investigate the role of mediator variable 'workload' between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees.

#### 2.6. Research questions and Hypotheses

The research hypotheses with their respective questions are as follow:

R1: Are high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees related?

H1a: *High commitment work system and turnover intention of employees are related.*

R2: Does workload mediate the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees?

H2a: *Workload mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees.*

### 3. Method

The main aim of the study is to explore and empirically examine the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees with the role of workload as a mediator variable between them, by focusing on employees in banking sector (both public and private sector bank i.e., HBL, Bank Al-Habib, NBP, MCB, Faisal Bank and Allied Bank) in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Here, the researchers are more interested to find cause and effect relationship between the proposed variables. This study is quantitative, descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional, survey based and primary data-based where structured verified questionnaires were used to collect primary data from the target respondents. The questionnaire has two sections. The first section asked about 'demographic characteristics of the respondents', which inquired information like the organization type, experience of the respondents, age of the respondent and their academic qualifications. Second section consists of questions regarding the main variables of the study; it is further divided into three sub-sections. In first and second sections, five-point Likert scale items are used. For measuring high commitment work system, ten-item based scale is used, and four items-based scale was used to measure turnover intention of employees. For measuring the workload variable, QWEE scale consisting of four items was employed. Whereas, all of the scales used were verified, structured and borrowed from the previous

studies with good reliability statistics. For collecting primary data for this study, employees in different banks (both public and private sector including HBL, Bank Al-Habib, NBP, MCB, Faisal Bank and Allied Bank) in Bahawalpur were approached and requested to fill the questionnaire.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Data Analysis

Data was analyzed with the help of software SPSS (25) to calculate Cronbach alpha, KMO and Bartlett's test, bivariate correlation, OLS regression and descriptive statistics.

### 4.2. Reliability Analysis

Reliability of the constructs was further ensured by calculating the value of the Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was applied to calculate the value that is 0.956, which is better than the recommended value of 0.50. Thus, the value indicates that questionnaire is reliable.

### 4.3. Response Rate

The researchers floated 385 questionnaires in total to the target population (employees of banking organizations within Bahawalpur city) using convenience sampling technique. The questionnaires were floated to those employees who were active employees and were familiar with the concepts like high commitment work system, turnover intention and workload (although during data collection stage, they were briefed about such concepts). All questionnaires were collected back with response rate of 100%.

### 4.4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO test ensures the adequacy of the research sample, whereas a value of 0.5 or higher is desired (Kaiser, 1974). For this study, the value is 0.708 that shows that the sample of the present study is quite acceptable to proceed. Whereas, the value of Bartlett's Test is significant that is less than 0.5 indicating the suitability of the analysis.

### 4.5. Respondent Demographics Organization Type

Total sample of the study is 380 and there are no missing values in the collected data. So, all the 385 samples are considered in the study. Data analysis showed that majority of respondents were from private banks with a total number of 287 in the total sample (74.50% of total sample). While, only 98 respondents are from public banks (that is 25.50% of total sample). Thus, most of the respondents were employed in the private banks as such banks are comparatively more to that of public banks and data collections was easy from them.

### 4.6. Experience of Respondents

Data analysis indicated that for experience demographics characteristic of the respondents, 178 respondents of the total sample have the banking experience between 1 to 5 years which are 46.20%. 112 of the total respondents (which are 29.10%) have the experience between 6 to 10 years. While, total of 64 respondents are in the experience bracket of 11 to 15 years that is 16.60%. Only 12 respondents are in the experience bracket of 16 to 20 years that are 3.10%. Moreover, 11 out of the total respondents have the experience of 21 to 25 years and only 8 employees have the experience of above 25 years which are 2.10%. Thus, all of the respondents have considerably banking experience.

### 4.7. Age of the Respondent

Out of the total respondents, those in the age bracket of 20 to 25 years are 27%. 144 of the total respondents are in the age bracket of 26 to 30 years (37.40%). 67 of the total respondents are in the age bracket of 31 to 35 years (17.40%). 48 of the total respondents are in the age bracket of 36 to 40 years (12.50%). 07 of the total respondents are in the age bracket of 41 to 45 years (1.80%). 15 of the total respondents have above 45 years of age (3.90%).

#### 4.8. Qualification of Respondents:

Data analysis showed that regarding the educational demographic characteristic of the respondents, those who have a qualification of Intermediate are 3.60%. Education level of 83 respondents is bachelor (21.60%). Fifty of total respondents (13%) have Masters/M.Phil. degrees and only four (1.10%) respondents have higher degrees.

#### 4.9. Correlation Analysis

Bivariate Pearson correlation was applied in this study and analysis showed that all variables are positively correlated to each other (having positive and moderate to strong relationships).

#### 4.10. Hypotheses Testing Using Regression Analysis

Regression was applied to test the proposed hypotheses. The adjusted R-square in this model is 0.54. This indicates that 54% of the variance in turnover intention is accounted for by high commitment work system.

#### 4.11. First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis describes that high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees are related. Hypothesis is:

*H1a: High commitment work system and turnover intention of employees are related.*

According to the regression analysis, there is significant relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees (at 0.05 sig. value). Thus, this hypothesis is accepted, and it can be concluded that high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees are in fact related. Previous studies (e.g., Ghosh and Gurunathan (2015)) also found the same relationship.

#### 4.12. Second Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that:

*H2a: Workload mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees.*

Sobel (1982) test was performed for analysis the mediation role of workload between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. For the path from high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees, through the mediation of workload. The unstandardized beta coefficients for this path were (a) 0.501 and (b) 0.247. The standard deviations respectively were 0.047 (SDa) and 0.039 (SDb). The results of the Sobel (1982) test show that workload significantly mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees ( $p < 0.005$ ). Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted, and it can be concluded that workload mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. While, Baron and Kenny (1986) approach also confirmed the same result. Summing up, In the final step, the remaining effect of the high commitment work system should decline or disappear when the mediating variables of workload is included in the measurement. When the mediating variables of workload is controlled for, the values on the effect of HCWS on TI of employees decreases ( $\beta = 0.173$ ,  $t = 3.782$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, it confirms the role of workload as a mediator between the relationship of high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees.

## 5. Conclusions and Contributions

The aim of this study was to explore and empirically examine the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees, and by focusing on the role of workload as a mediator variable between the said variables, by focusing on the employees in banking sector of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. First hypothesis' result found that there is significant relationship between the high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. While, the second hypothesis dealing with the mediating effect of workload found that workload mediates the relationship between

high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. Thus, the results showed that positive and significant relationship does exist between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. While the results also showed that workload mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. The results of the present study contributes to the literature related to the high commitment work systems and turnover intentions of employees (by focusing on the employees) of banking sector of Pakistan, and provides implications for the practitioners, academicians, governments and the researchers as well. As the existing literature focused on western perspectives (considering the non-financial sector), but this study provided insights and empirically confirmed the relationship between high commitment work systems and turnover intention of employee in the non-western context. Further this study also included the role of the workload (as the mediator) and showed that workload mediates the relationship between high commitment work system and turnover intention of employees. Based on the results, strategies, programs and techniques can be proposed and formulated that will create and strengthen the environment conducive for high commitment work systems that may significantly manage the turnover intentions of employees, because by providing the conducive and productive work environment, the employees' commitment can be further enhanced that will lead to less turnover of employees. Moreover, workload's data analysis result show that it mediates the relationship between HCWS and TI of employees. Thus, concerned can also devise their strategies and programs to manage and control workload of their employees to manage employees' turnover intentions that will lead to high commitment work systems. So, such results, based on the results of financial sector, propose valuable insights for further managing their employees' turnover intentions by managing workload that will assist in creating the high commitment work system in the organizations.

## 6. Limitations and Future Recommendations

Regarding the limitations as this study was carried out by focusing on the employees in banks (in city of Bahawalpur) only. Therefore, evidences from this study cannot be generalized to whole banking industry with great confidence. While, the study is cross sectional with respect to time frame of data collection, a longitudinal study may yield some further insights. Further studies should also consider other variables as mediators or moderator to have different insights. Time and cost were also the limitations faced by the researchers in this study. A future study may collect the data from another geographical location (other city/country) and any other industry.

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