

CAN SUSTAINABLE HRM PRACTICES ATTRACT TALENT-CROSS LAGGED STUDY AMONGST PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES IN INDIA

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Abstract: This study aims to understand and examine the effect of sustainable human resource management (HRM) practices on job-seeking behaviour of prospective employees. The psychological aspects of the proposed relationships are explored by proposing organisational attractiveness as a mediator. Based on the assumptions of social identity theory and signalling theory, the study examines these relations in a two-wave design. A total of 273 students in the final year of postgraduate management programmes from various campuses of a university in India participated in this two-wave time-lagged study over a period of six months. Data were analysed using structural equation modelling. Sustainable HRM practices of employee well-being and employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations were found to be related to job-seeking behaviour in potential employees and organisational attractiveness acted as a mediator. This study is the first to test the cross-lagged relations between sustainable HRM practices and job-seeking behaviour among potential employees. It is important to study this more for the sake of potential employees, as well as employers and society as a whole.

Keywords: Sustainable HRM, employee development, employee well-being.

Introduction

The scarcity of highly talented, motivated and engaged employees is the problem being faced by human resource management (HRM) of many organisations today. Firms realise that in this war of talent, they have to attract and retain knowledge workers to have a high-quality workforce (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Vaiman *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, talent scarcity, stress-related health issues of the workforce, dual-career couples, the increasing participation of women in the workforce (Darcy *et al.*, 2012) and many other issues forces sustainability in HRM (SUHRM) to become a key ingredient for organisations' survival.

The relevance of SUHRM becomes even more important as organisations operate in economic and social environment and cannot ignore societal discussions on sustainability (Stankevičiūtė, 2018). The global business scenario is undergoing a rapid change over last decade and the purpose of HRM is in transition (Ehnert, 2014), and India is no exception. The

practice of SUHRM that takes into account long-term organisational viability instead of short-term profits (Ehnert, 2009; Wright & Snell, 2005) is emerging.

Traditionally, employees have been considered as a cost by many companies and they try to minimise costs by compromising on safety and health standards of their employees. The practice of SUHRM considers natural resources and social capital at a par with economic capital (Cohen *et al.*, 2012; Ehnert *et al.*, 2014b; Ehnert & Harry, 2102). It offers a solution to portray the image of organisations to existing and prospective employees as responsible so as to attract and retain employees (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Docherty *et al.*, 2008; Ehnert, 2009; Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Zaugg, 2009).

As suggested by previous literature (Wikhamn, 2019), it is argued that in designing SUHRM, soft aspects, like taking sincere care of employees, including creating and giving decent work conditions, opportunities for development and attending to employees' physical, social and

psychosocial well-being at work, is important, but the main consideration is still organisational performance related to HR outcomes (Beer *et al.*, 2015).

Some researchers found that companies can only succeed in the long term if they emphasise selection and management of highly skilled workforce that offers a competitive advantage (Greening & Turban, 2000). Workforce engagement of both current and future employees is at the core of sustainability, which is potentially long-term economics (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Galpin & Whittington, 2012).

Moreover, it is seen that jobseekers prefer organisations with socially valued practices (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Bakhaus *et al.*, 2002; Cable & Turban, 2003; Renwick *et al.*, 2012). SUHRM is most frequently associated with the terms “human resource development” and “well-being of employees” (Zaugg, 2010). Also, environmental considerations result in employee retention and job satisfaction (Wagner & Marcus, 2011).

Since SUHRM creates a positive image of how organisations treat their employees, we posit that SUHRM may influence organisational attractiveness as an employer. Previous studies have failed to explore the complete spectrum of SUHRM in different aspects. This study extends the research by adopting a multidimensional perspective of SUHRM as part of the offerings to attract a large pool of potential candidates. It focuses on importance of SUHRM practices in selecting potential employers by analysing impact of four different dimensions of SUHRM viz. Employee well-being (Fineman, 2006; Mariappanadar, 2003) employee development, compensation practices and environmental practices, selected from literature following earlier studies and efforts in this field (Greening & Turban, 2000; Bakhaus *et al.*, 2002, Jones *et al.*, 2013, Randev & Jha, 2019) in creating organizational attractiveness. The aim of this study is to identify if SUHRM dimensions are important to jobseekers over a period of time.

To address this question, a cross-lagged design was used to explore how job applicants' attraction to organisations is influenced by the four aspects of SUHRM. The cross-lagged design assesses the relative importance of each decision variable and examines the stability and relationships between variables overtime to better understand how variables influence each other. This may lead to a better general understanding of the influence of the four SUHRM dimensions on the attractiveness of potential employers. The study findings will help managers and decision-makers understand the relationships among study variables, which, in turn, will help in improving overall organisational outcomes.

Sustainable HRM

Sustainable HRM is defined as the pattern of planned human resource strategies and practices with an intention to enable organisational goal achievement and reproducing a human resource base over long lasting time (Ehnert, 2009a). The practice of sSUHRM, if embedded in the culture of an organisation and communicated well (Knox & Freeman, 2006), can lead to organisational success by reducing costs (recruiting, income development). Evidence has shown that distinctive people and HRM practices of organisations can be a source of sustained competitive advantage (Wright & McMahan, 1992). Although Wright *et al.* (1994), posited that HRM practices can cease to be a source of competitive advantage as they can be easily imitated and substituted, Lado and Wilson (1994) refuted this claim and said it was difficult to substitute HRM practices as they were firm-specific and reflected the culture of the organisation. Resource-based view concurred that a firm's competitive advantage results from supply and adequate use of resources, if resources are valuable, non-substitutable and rare (Barney, 1991). The substance-oriented approach (Müller-Christ & Remer, 1999) of SUHRM, on the other hand, proposed that organisations should themselves secure long-term supply and reproduction of resources. This leads to investments in the human resource base,

thus creating organisational attractiveness as an employer.

The practice of SUHRM has been found to be having a positive impact on organisational performance (Kramar & Parry, 2014; Ybema *et al.*, 2017; Wikhamn, 2019). In fact, SUHRM practices (Lee, 2019), organisational justice and work-life balance programmes have been found to increase performance by strengthening the backbone of an organisation.

It has been noted that employee's perception of SUHRM has a positively significant influence towards employee voice behaviour and organisational attractiveness, and a negatively significant influence on employee turnover intentions (Vihari & Rao, 2018).

The role played by the human resource department of an organization in creating a sustainability-based organisational culture is immense (Harmon *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it is imperative for organisations adopting SUHRM to have effective HRM practices, including strict recruitment strategies (Grolleau *et al.*, 2012), appraisal and reward systems, which include environmental awareness and implementation in their evaluation process (Jabbour, *et al.*, 2013), and training and development programmes (Unnikrishnan & Hegde, 2007) that facilitate the nurturing of new sets of skills and competencies in employees of sustainable organisations.

Sustainable HRM and Organisational Attractiveness

Sustainable HRM affects a company in many ways, but the aim of this paper focuses on how it affects attractiveness to potential employees. It is seen that an individual's self-concept is enhanced by comparing one's organisation with other less favourable one. Ashforth and Mael (1989) found that an organization's good image plays an important role in clarifying an individual's self-concept.

Organisational attractiveness is the degree to which an individual would personally seek an organisation as an employer (Newbury *et al.*, 2006) based on the favourable beliefs that an

individual has of that organisation, and the extent to which an individual would recommend the organisation as an employer. Cable and Turban (2003) have argued that the positive image of an organisation leads to organisational attractiveness and influences potential employees' desire to pursue employment with that organisation. While there is plenty of evidence of SUHRM having an impact on company performance, there is scarcity of research on its impact on potential employees.

Research have shown that SUHRM adoption is a solution to this problem of attracting and retaining highly skilled workforce as it leads to employee-friendly practices (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Jabbour & Santos, 2008; Zaugg, 2009). Support for the proposition that SUHRM leads to organisational attractiveness appears in corporate sustainable performance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature, where the social dimension of SUHRM (Greening & Turban, 2000) is a differentiating factor in the labour market and has been found to enhance the attractiveness of organizations as employers. As sustainability means to maintain, review, or restore a resource (Clarke, 2013), some scholars have advised on using the potential of SUHRM (Ehnert, 2009; Vihari & Rao, 2018) for organisational attractiveness. Albinger and Freeman (2000) have also investigated the impact of corporate social performance on job-seeking populations and showed that it relates positively to organisational attractiveness for potential employees. Chaudhary (2019) found evidence that the environmental practices of an organisation attract high-quality potential employees.

In one study (Randev & Jha, 2019), SUHRM has been broadly classified into four broad themes, namely the economic, social, environmental and employee orientations concerning their outcomes. Chaudhary (2019) looked at the environmental aspect of sustainability in HRM in job attraction. The findings of the study revealed that green HRM played an important role in job-pursuit intentions of prospective applicants with an environmental

orientation. This study complements it by studying SUHRM practices from the point of economic, social, and environmental factors in a new research environment, demographically and geographically.

While studies related to SUHRM practices are almost negligible, research related to CSR and job attractiveness related to this paper are reviewed. Jones *et al.* (2014) showed that employee prestige, expected employee treatment and perceived job fit (environmental and community CSR practices) played a role in job attractiveness. Extensive job benefits, compensation packages, lay-off practices, and training also make an organisation attractive to employees (Gomes & Neves, 2011). CSR practices were found to be attractive to prospective candidates in a study by Duarte *et al.* (2015). Greening and Turban (2000) have shown that applicants were more likely to seek employment with socially responsible organisations. There are related empirical findings that have shown a positive link between green HR practices of an organisation, green branding and jobseekers (Jabbour, 2011).

Sustainable HRM and Job-seeking Behaviour

Job-seeking behaviour has been defined as the hunting for the sources of job vacancies with pursued intensity (Schwab *et al.*, 1987). Soelberg (1967) offered another perspective through a sequential model, which involves the identification and allocation of resources to job-seeking efforts, and the activation of the search through collecting information on vacancies.

Likewise, Barber *et al.* (1994) have suggested that job-seeking behaviour is linked to the actions of identifying the existence of job opportunities and gathering more detailed information on selected job alternatives. More recently, Kanfer *et al.* (2001) defined job-seeking behaviour as a self-regulatory process beginning with identification and commitment to job goals.

Past research have shown that employer familiarity, image and reputation had positive impacts on the job-seeking behaviours of

potential employees (Cable & Turban, 2003; Collins, 2007; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens *et al.*, 2005). Positive employer image of their HR practices, like focusing on people, has an impact on preparatory job search, including talking to friends and school alumni about the job, as well as preparing resumes (Yu, Davis, 2017). Jobseekers perform self-justification of PJS efforts by telling themselves that they have gained important information through such behaviour (Holland *et al.*, 2002).

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis

Research on the mechanisms that may explain how sustainability positively affect employee outcomes have identified organisational attractiveness as a mediator (Chaudhary, 2019; Story & Castenheira, 2016). Altogether, the above evidence indicates the importance of organisational attractiveness for the relationship between sustainability and job-seeking behaviour. As discussed previously, CSR and environmental practices have been explored in assorted studies. One study by Presley *et al.* (2018) looked into sustainability performance in job-seeking research and empirically tested the linkages. This study differs from the above in the sense that they examined organisational attractiveness as a mechanism to explain the connection between SUHRM and potential employees' job choice search in a cross-sectional design, whereas this study is a cross-lagged study conducted to understand the causal and directional relationship. Research identifying the most important SUHRM practices, looking into which of these practices were the most important in job search research would add to the knowledge of sustainability and organisational attractiveness.

The practice of SUHRM, with all four dimensions in job search research, has not been studied yet. Also, most of these studies only explored synchronous links (due to their cross-sectional design), so virtually no evidence exists about the direction of the effects. To overcome this common pitfall, this study tested the

influences of SUHRM practices, organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour across a six-month time lag.

Thus, this research seeks to answer three main questions:

- RQ1:** Does the adoption of SUHRM practices affect prospective employee outcomes?
- RQ2:** Are there reversed or even cross-lagged effects between SUHRM and its outcomes in terms of organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour, such as assumed by signalling theory (Hobfoll, 2001; 2011) and social identity theory (Turban & Greening, 2017)?
- RQ3:** Which of the SUHRM practices are more attractive to prospective employees?

The author proposes the testing of a mediation model linking SUHRM with prospective employees' job-seeking behaviour by drawing inference from recruitment literature. It can be seen from literature on the matter that HRM practices do not influence individual attitude and behaviour directly. This occurs through certain social and psychological processes (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). Deploying the main assertions of signalling and social identity theories, organisational attractiveness was proposed as a mediator of the relationship between SUHRM and job-seeking behaviour.

By investigating the role of SUHRM on the job-seeking behaviour of prospective employees, this paper attempts to make three main contributions to the literature. First, the study addresses the need for more research on SUHRM, which is an emerging concept and has received little research attention. Second, this research fills a key knowledge void in the literature on SUHRM, which has concentrated mainly on studying the impact CSR and environmental practices have on potential employee outcomes. Third, by illuminating the psychological processes explaining the association of SUHRM with job-seeking behaviour, this research adds significantly to the behavioural literature on HRM.

Signalling theory argues that applicants form perceptions of employers based on incomplete information they encounter during the job-search process, such as through recruitment advertisements, as well as recruiters (Wright, 2010). Considering signalling theory by signifying organisation's SUHRM practices, SUHRM can be expected to influence the perceptions of prospective employees of the work environment of an organisation. Thus, SUHRM may attract prospective employees by providing a signal of good corporate citizen.

Social identity theory proposed by Tajfel and his colleagues (Leaper, 2011) is about the ways in which people's self-concepts are based on their membership in social groups. One's self-concept is influenced by membership in different social organisations, including the company for which one works (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton *et al.*, 1994). Employees enhance their self-concept by comparing their organisations with less favourable organisations. By implementing SUHRM practices, organisations positively differentiate themselves from competitors and make them appear as favourable places to work in further enhancing self-concept and self-esteem (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Dick, 2004). High-quality employees are more likely to engage in job-seeking behaviour as organisational attractiveness has been reported to relate significantly with job-seeking behaviours (Gomes, 2010; Neves, 2010; Yu, 2017; Davis, 2017).

Thus, SUHRM may attract potential employees by providing them a signal of the organisation's benevolent nature and the likely ambience of the work environment. While SUHRM practices may make an organisation attractive to prospective employees, leading to their indulging in job-seeking behaviours, job search may also induce them to be getting attracted to organisations with SUHRM practices.

Based on arguments inherent in signalling and social identity theories, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

- H1.** SUHRM practices have a positive cross-lagged impact on organisational attractiveness.
- H2.** Organisational attractiveness has a positive cross-lagged impact on job-seeking behaviours.
- H3.** Organisational attractiveness mediates the relationship between perceived SUHRM practices and job-seeking behaviour.
- H4.** SUHRM practices have a positive cross-lagged impact on job-seeking behaviour.
- H5.** Job-seeking behaviour has a positive cross-lagged effect on organisational attractiveness
- H6.** Organisational attractiveness has a positive cross-lagged effect on SUHRM practices.
- H7.** Job-seeking behaviour has a positive cross-lagged on SUHRM practices.

In the area of recruitment, signalling theory is able to concentrate on the beginning portion of the application process; what perceptions the applicant forms from the limited amount of information they are initially provided with in the job-seeking process.

In sum, the conceptual model for this study and their relations is presented in Figure1.

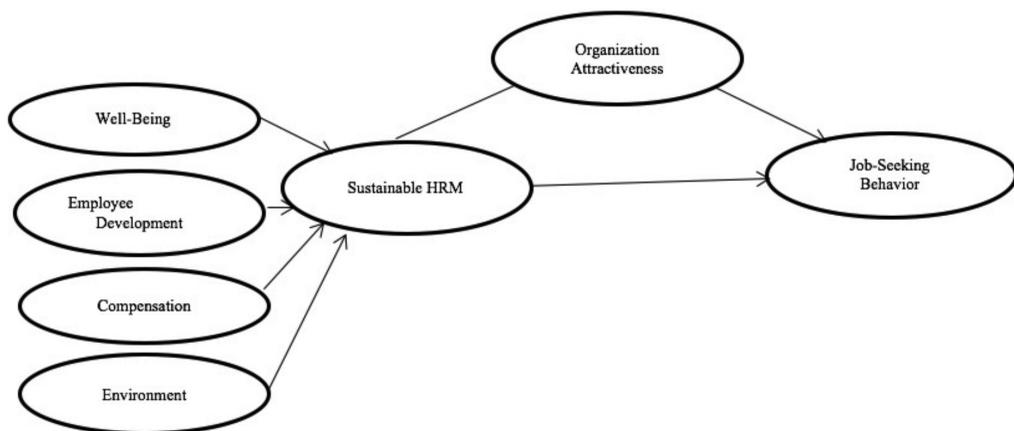


Figure 1: The Conceptual model for the cross-lagged relationships between SUHRM, organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour

Method

Participants and Procedure

The data were obtained by means of online questionnaires sent to all the students in the final year of the MBA programme of different campuses of a prominent university in India. The convenient sampling technique was used for the study. Data collection took place in the month of August 2019 (T1), when students of the programme entered their final year and six months later in January 2020 (T2) before getting their placements in various companies. At both times, the online surveys included basically the same questions.

Of the 400 questionnaires sent at T1, 306 were filled in and returned, which yielded a response rate of 76.5%. About 65% of the respondents were male. The average age of the surveyed students in T1 was 22 years. Of the 400 questionnaires sent at T2, a total of 273 were filled in and returned, which yielded a response rate of 62.1%. The data of 273 at T2 could be linked to T1 as it involved respondents filling in the questionnaires twice.

Measures

All variables were measured at two moments in time (T1 and T2), with six months' lag. To the best of the knowledge of the author, there is no

validated scale to measure SUHRM practices. Therefore, the construction of instruments measuring SUHRM practices is based on traditional HRM practices, which may not cover the entire scope of SUHRM as proposed by various scholars, but do reveal major examples of practices that help organisations reproduce their HR base.

We measured the social dimension of SUHRM practices with nine items from a scale developed by Diaz *et al.* (2017), which includes three sub-dimensions: well-being of employees, employee development and compensation practices. For all three sub-dimensions, answers were given on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from not important (1) to highly important (5). Each of the three sub-dimensions was measured with five items each. The reliability of these responses was analysed by using Cronbach's alpha. All statements have high internal consistency values of between 0.8 and 0.9.

For the current study, the reliability of the SUHRM scale is high as well (0.80 at T1 and 0.83 at T2). The validity appeared to be good as well, with one-factor solutions on T1 and T2, which explained 73.8% and 74.5% of the variances, respectively. Environmental practices were measured using Dumont's environmental norm scale comprising three items. A sample item is "A company that sets green goals for its employees". Responses ranged from 1=not at all to 5=very much time.

Organisational attractiveness was assessed with the scale items adopted from Highhouse *et al.* (2003). Sample items included, "Job at this company is very appealing to me". Answers were obtained on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The internal consistency of this scale was 0.81.

Job-seeking behaviour was assessed using an 11-item index based on the behavioural scales of Blau (1993; 1994) and Kopelman *et al.* (1992). This 11-item index measured job-seeking activities, like making inquiries about a job, preparing and revising resumes, and reading classified and wanted advertisements. Response

options ranged from 1 = *no time at all* to 5 = *very much time*. The internal consistency of this scale was 0.89. Cronbach's alphas for the all study variables are presented in Figure 1.

Analyses

To test the hypothesised models, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) with the AMOS 26 software package, version 26. We used a full panel design, including all study variables at T1 and T2. Based on theoretical and empirical arguments (Vihari & Rao, 2018), SUHRM practices were modelled as a second-order latent construct, which is composed of four latent sub-dimensions (employee well-being, employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations). Furthermore, we included the mediator, i.e. organisational attractiveness, and the dependent variable, i.e. job-seeking behaviour, as separate latent constructs.

We have followed the analytical approach as suggested by Cole and Maxwell (2003) and Taris and Kompier (2006) to test our hypothesis, which is based on data collected at two points in time. This approach allows the testing of partial mediation using a two-wave design (Law *et al.*, 2016, Vander Elst, & De Witte, 2016; Spagnoli & Balducci, 2017; Richter *et al.*, 2020). Cole and Maxwell (2003) proposed the testing of two pairs of cross-lagged analyses, which allows a comparison among several competing models (viz. stability, causal, reversed and reciprocal models). The use of two-wave design data testing of partial mediation suggests: 1) examination of the causal relationship between the predictor and the mediator; and, 2) the testing of the relationship between the mediator and the outcome.

Various competing models were identified after following the recommended analysis, namely stability models with autoregressive paths between latent constructs pairs across time. Causal models include autoregressive effects and causal relationships between SUHRM and organisational attractiveness and between organisational attractiveness and job-seeking

behaviour. Reverse causation models, include autoregressive effects between organisational attractiveness and SUHRM and between job-seeking behaviour and organisational attractiveness; and, reciprocal models include all paths specified in stability models, reverse models and reciprocal models at T1 and T2. Fit indices, like comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), commonly used for evaluating goodness-of-fit in SEM, were utilised (Byrne, 2013). Values exceeding 0.90 for CFI and TLI, and lower than or equal to 0.08 for RMSEA indicate an acceptable fit.

Theoretically, it is difficult to determine the right period for cross-lagged analysis. We consider six months as an appropriate time lag for testing cross-lagged relationships following other recent studies into concepts related to sustainable employability, such as psychological well-being (Dagenais-Desmarais *et al.*, 2017) and employability (Semejin *et al.*, 2019).

First, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the psychometric properties of the constructs. The variables were estimated with one-factor congeneric models. For identification purposes, we set the variance of the latent variable to 1 and removed the fixed regression weight of the first factor loading. We evaluated the overall measurement model through CFA, which tests whether theoretical structural constructs adequately represent empirical data. The CFA model, which allowed all the factors to be correlated over time, showed good fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(306)}=326.07$, $p<0.01$; CFI=0.98; TLI=0.96; RMSEA=0.059).

Results

Table 3 summarises goodness-of-fit indices of the measurement models and the hypothesised structural models. It can be seen that all measurement models displayed a good fit to the data, suggesting that the assessment tool of job-seeking behaviour, organisational attractiveness and SUHRM practices were valid and reliable across two waves (Anderson

& Gerbing, 1988). Results of goodness-of-fit indices of three hypothesised structural models showed that models fit the present two-wave data satisfactorily (CFI>0.95, NFI>0.96, TLI=0.91 and RMSEA=0.059).

Table 1 presents the scales' Cronbach's alphas, means, standard deviations, inter-correlations and test-retest reliabilities of the study variables. Fit statistics of the competitive models from SEM analyses are depicted in Table 2. The results show that both the measurement model and direct effect model with autoregressive paths and a direct effect between SUHRM practices and job-seeking behaviour had a good fit to the data. However, based on the results from the direct model, there was significant relationship between T₁ SUHRM practices and T₂ job-seeking behaviour ($\beta=0.79$, $p<0.001$).

Second, alternative models examining relationships between SUHRM practices and mediator organisational attractiveness were compared (Table 2). In comparison to the stability model (M1_{stability}), the causal model (M1_{causal}), which includes autoregressive and causal effects between T1 SUHRM practices and T2 organisational attractiveness, showed a better fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2=15.41$, $\Delta df=3$, $p<0.01$). Thus, H3 is supported.

The reverse causation model, however, did not show any considerable improvement compared with the stability model ($\Delta\chi^2=5.081$, $df=6$, n.s). The reciprocal model also did not show any improvement compared with the stability model ($\Delta\chi^2=6.307$, $df=3$, n.s). Considering all these together, it can be inferred that the causal model, where T1 SUHRM practices predicts T2 organisational attractiveness, is the model that best represents the data. H5 is not supported.

Thirdly, as depicted in Table 3, the causal model, T1 organization attractiveness and T2 job seeking behaviour fit the data better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi^2=22.065$, $\Delta df=3$, $p<0.01$). The reverse causation model ($\Delta\chi^2=4.15$, $\Delta df=6$, ns) did not fit the data better than the stability model. Similarly, the reciprocal model

also did not fit the data better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi^2=10.981$, $\Delta df=3$, n.s). Thus, the causal model best represents the data. Hence, H6 is not supported.

Figure 2 represents the autoregressive and cross-lagged relationships ($M1_{causal}$) between SUHRM practices (employee well-being, employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations) and organisational attractiveness at T2. Employee well-being practices at T1 had a positive cross-lagged effect on organisational attractiveness at T2 ($\beta = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, employee development practices had a positive cross-lagged effect on organisational attractiveness at T2 ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$). However, compensation practices ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.48$) and environmental practices ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = 0.43$) did not predict organisational attractiveness significantly. Thus, H1 is partially supported.

In addition, we tested the cross-lagged relationship between SUHRM practices and job-seeking behaviour, but did not find adequate support for the hypothesised direct effect of SUHRM on job-seeking behaviour ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.42$) and the reverse causal effect was also not significant ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.46$). Thus, H4 and H7 were not supported.

In sum, the results from the analysis showed that employee well-being and employee development practices of SUHRM, more than compensation and environmental practices, predicted organisational attractiveness six months later, thus providing partial support for H1. Also, the causal model (i.e. organisational attractiveness predicting job-seeking behaviour) fit the data well and hence H2 was supported as depicted in Figure 3.

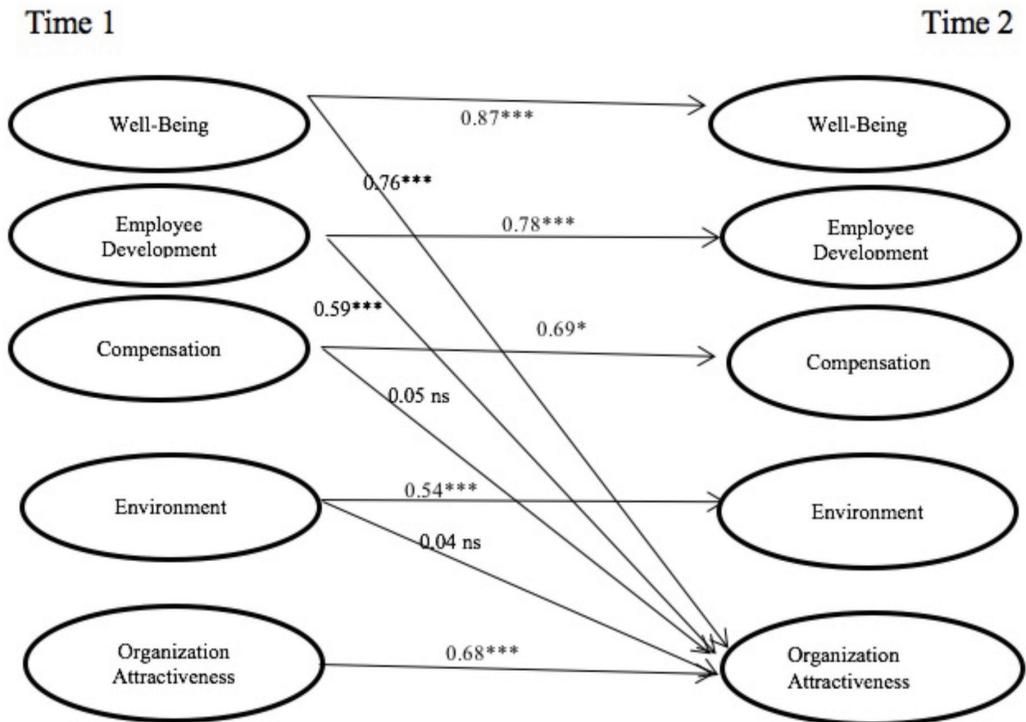


Figure 2: The causal model with T1 SUHRM practices and T2 organisational attractiveness

Table 1: Cronbach’s Alpha, means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables

Scale.	M.	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1.WB T1	3.53.	0.91	(.92)	.61	.67	.50	.80	.57	.13	.18	.46	.31	.35	.37
2.WB T2	3.45	0.92		(.93)	.44	.70	.50	.85	.20	.41	.37	.51	.30	.47
3.ED T1	3.90	0.74			(.85)	.56	.65	.45	.24	.25	.37	.21	.37	.37
4.ED T2	3.85	0.75				(.81)	.40	.69	.23	.35	.37	.35	.39	.27
5.C T1	3.69	0.77					(.85)	.53	.10	.12	.41	.26	.42	.34
6.C T2	3.68	0.90						(.90)	.16	.29	.40	.48	.34	.47
7.EC T1	3.53	0.93							(.76)	.62	.16	.18	.13	.26
8.EC T2	3.40	0.90								(.80)	.23	.30	.15	.35
9.OA T1	3.76	0.84									(.92)	.59	.33	.30
10.OA T2	3.66	0.90										(.88)	.25	.35
11.JSB T1	3.71	0.80											(.81)	.40
12.JSB T2	3.63.	0.85												(.80)

Note. T1 (N=306),T2(N=273);Correlations:r<0.11,p=ns;r>0.12<0.17,p<.05;r>0.17,p<0.001

Table 2: Fit statistics for testing cross-lagged relationships between SUHRM and organisational attractiveness (N=273)

Model	Model Description	df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf
M _{mes}	Measurement.	1151.763	.05	0.94	0.95		
M _{dir}	Direct effect of SUHRM on OA	306.752	.05	0.95	0.96		
Cross lagged relationship between Sustainable HRM(SUHRM) and Organization attractiveness (OA)							
M1 _{stability}	Stability	499.290	212	0.05	0.95	0.95 _{xx}	
M1 _{causal}	Causality	483.880	209	0.05	0.96	0.95	15.41** 3
M1 _{Reverse}	Reversed	489.197	206	0.05	0.95	0.95	10.093n.s. 6
M1 _{Reciprocal}	Reciprocal.	492.983	209	0.05	0.95	0.95	6.307n.s. 3

p<0.01;*p<0.001

Table 3: Fit statistics for testing cross-lagged relationships between organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour (N=273)

Model.	Model Description.	χ^2	df.	RMSEA.	CFI.	TLI	Model Comparison $\Delta\chi^2.$	Δdf
Cross lagged relationship between Organization Attractiveness and Job Seeking Behavior								
M1 _{stability}	Stability	300.048	133	0.05	0.95	0.92		
M1 _{causal}	Causality.	277.983	30	0.05	0.97	0.95	22.065**.	3
M1 _{Reverse}	Reversed	295.890	127	0.04	0.95	0.96	4.158n.s.	6
M1 _{Reciprocal}	Reciprocal	289.067	130	0.04	0.95	0.96	10.981	3

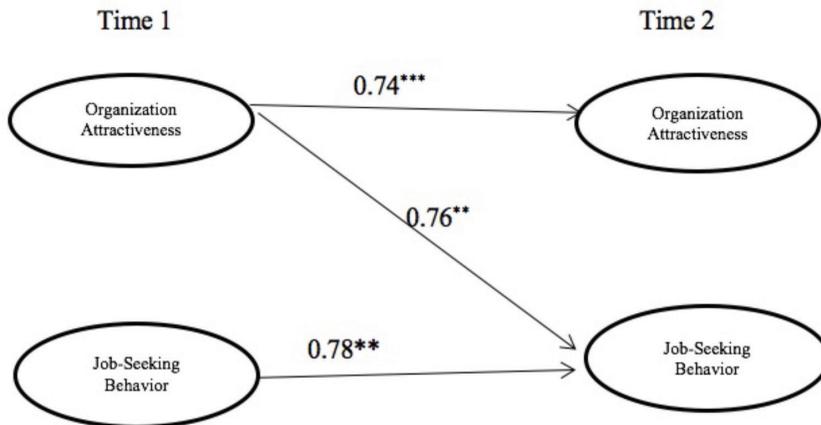


Figure 3: The causal model with T1 organisational attractiveness and T2 job-seeking behaviour

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to provide cross-lagged analyses for the links between SUHRM practices, organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour. In doing so, we integrated insights from literature about SUHRM and organisational attractiveness (App, 2012; Zaugg *et al.*, 2001; Wagner, 2011), which helped explain the processes underlying the relationship between SUHRM and job-seeking behaviour.

The results partially supported our conceptual model, specifically organisational attractiveness at T2 was predicted by SUHRM at T1 when tested across a six-month interval. Also, organisational attractiveness at T1 did predict job-seeking behaviour at T2.

Our results have important implications because they show that SUHRM practices, like employee well-being and employee development, are known to be vital for organisational attractiveness to potential employees (Carroll, 2015).

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

The goal of this study was to test the cross-lagged relationships between SUHRM practices, organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour by means of a two-wave full-panel design with a six-month time

lag. First, following the recommendations of Cole and Maxwell (2003), we conducted a series of analyses intended to establish the direction of the relationships between the study concepts. The results largely supported the hypothesised causal direction between SUHRM practices and organisational attractiveness and provided evidence for effects streaming from organisational attractiveness to job-seeking behaviour, after controlling for baseline autoregressive relationships. Second, by examining the relationships in our model across a six-month period, we were able to test whether this time lag was appropriate for the hypothesised relationships to unfold. It was necessary to validate our study model across time because research on SUHRM has only started to reveal the effectiveness of this brand in enhancing organisational attractiveness (Presley *et al.*, 2018).

To date, owing to its predominantly cross-sectional nature, the existing research on SUHRM and employee outcomes has not been able to provide evidence for the directionality of the hypothesised relationships. To outline the contributions of this study, we paid attention to the causal effects between SUHRM and organisational attractiveness, and between organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour, and discussed the appropriateness of the time lag we used.

Our findings show that SUHRM practices (employee well-being, employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations) increase potential employee attractiveness of social and developmental aspects six month later, thereby confirming the assumption that SUHRM practices leads to organisational attractiveness. This may be because it posits that SUHRM exerts a positive influence on how organisations treat their employees (App, 2012) and also the fact that they are socially responsible organisations (Greening & Turban, 2000). Our results largely corroborate previous findings on SUHRM and organisational attractiveness (Presley & Presley, 2018); we also added to the limited knowledge on temporal effects by studying how they unfold over a period of six months.

Organisations that follow SUHRM practices influence prospective employees to join and work for them by creating a positive image as a good corporate citizen. Organisations known for their corporate citizenship behaviour are known as good places to work in, thus enhancing organisational attractiveness. This enhanced organisational attractiveness, in turn, leads to increased job-seeking behaviour of prospective employees in such organisations (Gomes & Neves, 2010).

Moreover, the study results are in contrast with Wagner (2001), who stated that environmental activities of SUHRM have an impact on job-seeking behaviour. This could be due to the fact that Germany is very particular about environmental regulations compared with India and other Asian countries. Thus, it is likely that prospective employees consider it the most important part of SUHRM in employer selection.

Despite our expectation that compensation practices and environmental considerations of SUHRM can enhance employee perceptions of organisations leading to job-seeking behaviour, we found no support for this contention. To better understand this, we scrutinised our sample more closely. The demographic characteristics revealed that the majority of the participants

(54.2%) were millennials. In addition, about a quarter of them (25.6%) had no work experience. To filter out potential interference of the sample's demographic characteristics on the study findings, we tested our models with several control variables. The results showed that only the age was positively and significantly linked to preparatory job-seeking behaviour, indicating that potential employees who sought organisations with well-being and development opportunities prefer SUHRM practices more than their colleagues who had no work experience.

Sustainable employability, including HR practices like employee well-being, development and others, are related to high work performance and motivation (Ybema *et al.*, 2017). As per the Pew research report, employee development programmes and well-being programmes have taken precedence over salary. More than one third of the population in India are millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) and they are intrigued about these opportunities at the time of hiring. The above demographics might provide a clue to our finding. Millennials who have been touted as environmentally conscious by popular press do not value these things as highly predicted (Tavanti *et al.*, 2015). They consider meaningful work with development and advancement opportunities and well-being more than compensation practices (Morrell & Abston, 2019).

Research shows employees whose well-being are taken care of are more productive and satisfied (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). This can be accounted to the fact that new generations who are entering the workforce value jobs that respects their spare time, allowing them to follow sports and take up training and development activities and enhance their social welfare (Bhaskar, 2012). They want incentive policies and benefits that allow them to be happier and contented rather than being concerned about salary (Sanchez *et al.*, 2020).

Globalisation and competitiveness have fuelled social changes in addition to economic trends. Organisations have to be aware of this

to achieve and maintain sustainable competitive advantage. Talent management practices result in organisational outcomes, like organisational attractiveness, and achievement of goals, as well as human resource outcomes, namely commitment, motivation, satisfaction, etc. (Langenegger *et al.*, 2011). To theoretically explain the processes between organisational attractiveness and job-seeking behaviour, scholars often resorted to one of the key tenets of decision-making theory (Berg & Uhlenbroff, 2018), where maximisers who engage in more comparisons look for single best option, conduct exhaustive research of all possibilities and are fixated in finding the best option.

In light of these theoretical underpinnings, it stands to reason that organisational attractiveness may enhance job-seeking behaviour in two ways. First, by integrating SUHRM practices into the employer's brand, it may positively broaden individuals' perceptions of the organisation's environment, thereby enabling potential employees to form opinions about what it would be like to work for that organisation (Greening & Turban, 2000). Second, by communicating SUHRM practices, the organisation enables potential employees to interpret substance-oriented understanding of the firm, thus attracting high-quality employees to apply for a job at the firm (Presley *et al.*, 2018).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are some limitations to the current study. First, owing to the homogeneity of the data (i.e. collected among students from one particular university), the generalisability of our findings and conclusions is limited to prospective employees studying at one university. Therefore, caution is called for when applying our conclusions to other populations. To overcome this limitation, future research could test our model on data obtained from a heterogeneous sample that includes different streams, like engineering, law etc., and from different universities.

Although this study shed light on relationships between some of the variables, it provided no information about concrete results, in the sense, whether or not participants really found a job or not. Although it was a two-wave study, the participants' status at a later point could be evaluated. The practice of SUHRM has implications on other concepts, like talent retention, engagement etc., but our focus has been on recruitment. It would also add to the knowledge of SUHRM to find out how working with the brand affects the lives of individuals in terms of job satisfaction, commitment and motivation. Our study focused on management students as prospective employees. Additional researches clarifying the stability of these results are required specifically if it involves a diversified pool of prospective applicants. It would also be interesting to test and replicate this study on various age groups to see if the results maintain their stability. We consider the results as stable as the influence of age on the dependent variables were controlled.

We have studied only four dimensions of SUHRM, namely employee well-being, employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations. There are other important dimensions, such as long-term orientation, profitability, external partnership, etc., which can be a subject of future studies. Different cultures and religions could be used to analyse the meaning of sustainability for societies and businesses as characteristics of SUHRM are different across different cultures. Our results suggest that SUHRM practices can give organisations a competitive advantage by attracting a larger applicant pool, and we hope that future research on the questions and topics that we have described will illuminate when, how, and why SUHRM is associated with positive recruitment outcomes.

Conclusions

This study extends the existing knowledge of SUHRM and its attractiveness as a concept for organisations, thereby encouraging prospective employees' job-seeking behaviour. Our results

indicated that SUHRM practices, which include well-being, employee development, compensation practices and environmental considerations, might play a key role in shaping employees' perceptions of their workplace (e.g., by enhancing perceptions of available autonomy and social support, fair wages, development opportunities etc.). Importantly, as a suchlike SUHRM is deemed to be effective in attracting highly qualified and experienced talent who develop a sense of pride in being associated with such organisations and have high expectations of good treatment from such organisations (Almarzooqi *et al.*, 2019). Organisations may facilitate this by providing SUHRM that is integrated with human resource policies, practices and initiatives to attract highly qualified and motivated employees. This has implications for the organisation's competitiveness, reputation, brand and ability to retain talent.

Ensuring employee well-being would lead to reduced business health costs, lower absenteeism and improve productivity (Rucker, 2017). Employee development results in improved business results, innovation and enhanced customer satisfaction. Development in terms of sustainability focuses not just on current skills, but also on future requirements in terms of skill sets and capacities. Development is a long-term orientation, considering employees as assets and agents of change (Ehnert *et al.*, 2014). Environmental considerations as part SUHRM is attractive to environmentally conscious younger generation or highly skilled employees. Thus, environmentally responsible employer branding may serve as a feature for organisational attractiveness.

By empirically testing the relationship between SUHRM and job-seeking behaviour, the study adds to the understanding of the concept of SUHRM and its consequences and thus reinforces theory development in the area of SUHRM, which is still in its nascent stage. Also, by highlighting various social and psychological processes through which SUHRM influences job-seeking behaviour of potential employees, the study fulfils a major

gap in the literature, where dearth of research exploring the mechanisms linking SUHRM with employee outcomes has been acknowledged. Also, by testing a mediation model, this research addresses the need for investigation of the conditions that strengthen the above relationship.

Organisations engaging in SUHRM are likely to be viewed as employers of choice by prospective applicants. This knowledge is going to encourage practitioners to effectively integrate SUHRM with human resource policies, practices and employee initiatives to attract quality applicants. This has implications for corporate communication, where organisations should emphasise their SUHRM practices in recruitment messages. Seeing that this study utilised final-year management students as subjects in this cross-lagged study, organisations are likely to benefit by making an honest communication of their SUHRM and achievements at various stages of recruitment and selection process. Organisations promoting SUHRM are likely to have a positive impact on prospective applicants during the process of recruitment, as providing SUHRM information in the recruitment advertisement has been reported to result in organisational attractiveness, reputation and prestige and intention to pursue employment (Chaudhary, 2018). The study has also implications for those organisations not implementing SUHRM as they are going to cast a negative image on potential recruits.

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