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High-performance work practices and nurses' intention to leave: the mediating role of organizational cynicism and the moderating role of human resource management-related educational background

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ABSTRACT

Recently, an increasing stream of research has examined high-performance work practices in the health care context. In this vein, high-performance work practices have been shown to be related to various employees' attitudes and behaviors including intention to leave. This study attempted to improve our understanding of the relationship between high-performance work practices and intention to leave by jointly examining mediating and moderating mechanisms. Results from a sample of 299 private nurses supported our moderated mediation model thus demonstrating that organizational cynicism mediated the relationship between high-performance work practices and intention to leave and further that this indirect effect is dependent on nurses' human resource management-related educational background.

KEYWORDS

High-performance work practices; organizational cynicism; intention to leave; educational background; nurses; moderated mediation

Introduction

In the last decades, several scholars have focused on the role of human resource management (HRM) in engendering positive organizational outcomes. In this regard, empirical research has provided useful insights into the salutary effect of HRM practices on organizational performance through improving employees' skills, knowledge, and motivation (e.g. Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997; MacDuffie, 1995; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000; West, Guthrie, Dawson, Borrill, & Carter, 2006). These practices are often called high-performance work practices (HPWPs) (also referred to as high-performance work systems or high-involvement work practices). HPWPs are described as those practices 'that create synergistic effects [...] and reinforce one another to increase organizational efficiency and effectiveness' (Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, & Campion, 2013, p. 1185).

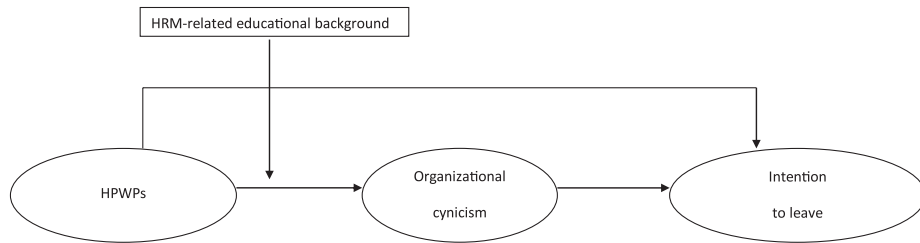


Figure 1. Hypothesized model.

Building on prior studies, recent work has attempted to highlight the positive effect of HPWPs on core employee outcomes such as, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior and job performance (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Macky & Boxall, 2007; Pare & Tremblay, 2007; Qiao, Khilji, & Wang, 2009). In this vein, empirical research has also demonstrated the negative relationship between HPWPs and employees' intention to leave (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney, & Stephen Taylor, 2009; García-Chas, Neira-Fontela, & Castro-Casal, 2014; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Jyoti, Rani, & Gandotra, 2015; Lam, Chen, & Takeuchi, 2009).

Given the high turnover rate among nurses which leads to a significant shortage and negative organizational outcomes (Hayes et al., 2006; Tourangeau, Cummings, Cranley, Ferron, & Harvey, 2010; Tummers, Groeneveld, & Lankhaar, 2013) it is of utmost importance to underscore organizational factors that may lessen this detrimental phenomenon. Similarly, Bobbio and Manganelli argued that retention of nurses 'could be considered as one of the most critical challenges for nurse managers and hospital management all around the world' (2015, p. 1181). In light of these challenges, researchers have addressed the impact of HPWPs on nurses' intention to leave by providing similar findings (Ang, Bartram, McNeil, Leggat, & Stanton, 2013).

Previous empirical studies have suggested several mediators regarding the relationship between HPWPs and intention to leave such as motivation, job embeddedness, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Ang et al., 2013; Bergiel et al., 2009; García-Chas et al., 2014; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Lam et al., 2009). However, scant research has addressed negative underlying mechanisms in explaining this association. To address this gap, we examine the mediating role of organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism has recently attracted increasing attention due to the contemporary corporate scandals which have increased employees' mistrust thus indicating its detrimental effect on core employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to leave (Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013). However, existing research has largely ignored the relationship between HPWPs and organizational cynicism. In their recent meta-analysis, Chiaburu

et al. (2013) proposed that positive and negative work experiences may determine employees' perceptions of organizational cynicism. Given that fulfilling or unfulfilling HPWPs may shape positive and negative work experiences, respectively, this study suggests that HPWPs will be related to organizational cynicism and, in turn, intention to leave. In this way, we aim to advance our understanding of the HPWPs – intention to leave relationship by suggesting that a negative behavioral outcome (i.e. intention to leave) may be explained not only by low positive attitudes including organizational commitment or job satisfaction but also from negative attitudes such as organizational cynicism.

As noted, most previous studies have focused on the psychological mechanisms that underlie this relationship. As a consequence, there is little empirical research on the moderators that might constrain or exacerbate the effect of HPWPs on intention to leave. Using person–environment fit as a theoretical framework, we posit that nurses' educational background regarding HRM may interact with their perceptions of HPWPs and therefore increase the incongruence and misfit between their attributes and values and those of the organization. Consequently, we examine HRM-related educational background as a boundary condition that moderates the relationship of HPWPs with organizational cynicism and then intention to leave. In fact, previous studies have suggested that employees' perceptions of incongruence may lead to both organizational cynicism (Naus, van Iterson, & Roe, 2007) and intention to leave (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Taken together, we propose and test the moderated mediation model which is represented in Figure 1 and described below.

In sum, this study contributes to the literature in four ways. First, we explore an important psychological mechanism, namely organizational cynicism, through which HPWPs lead to intention to leave. Second, to date, very little empirical research has investigated potential moderators on the relationship between HPWPs and employee outcomes. Additionally, literature lacks of empirical research regarding the confounding role of employees' educational background in the effect of HPWPs. Therefore, we provide new insights into the interaction between HPWPs and employees' educational background in predicting their attitudes (cynicism) and behaviors (intention to leave). Combined, this study extends the literature by examining a complex model which simultaneously encompasses underlying mediating and moderating mechanisms. In doing so, it also contributes to the HPWP literature by highlighting an unexplored theoretical framework, namely person–environment fit, and consequently offers a better understanding of the effect of such work practices. Third, we respond to the call for more emphasis on employees' perceptions of HPWPs in health care context (Bonias, Bartram, Leggat, & Stanton, 2010). Fourth, we add to the limited, albeit emerging, empirical research on the antecedents of organizational cynicism by proposing HPWPs as important predictors.

Theory and hypotheses

HPWPs and intention to leave

Intention to leave refers to ‘the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability of leaving an organization in the near future’ (Guchait & Cho, 2010; p. 1234). Several scholars have shown that intention to leave is a key predictor of actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Additionally, previous empirical studies have proposed a host of attitudinal variables as predictors of nurses’ intention to leave including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement (Carter & Tourangeau, 2012; Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Galletta, Portoghese, & Battistelli, 2011; Larrabee et al., 2003; Liou, 2009). Allied to this, health care literature has indicated the positive relationship of HPWPs with these employee outcomes (Boselie, 2010; Harmon et al., 2003; Young, Bartram, Stanton, & Leggat, 2010).

As noted above, in organizational (Arthur, 1994; Bergiel et al., 2009; García-Chas et al., 2014; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Jyoti et al., 2015; Lam et al., 2009) and health care (Ang et al., 2013; Baluch, Salge, & Piening, 2013) literature, researchers have found that HPWPs are negatively related to intention to leave. Last, Bartram, Casimir, Djurkovic, Leggat, and Stanton (2012) demonstrated that HPWPs not only have a direct effect on nurses’ intention to leave but also serve as moderator in the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. Based on the above argumentation, we anticipate the negative relationship between HPWPs and nurses’ intention to leave.

Hypothesis 1: Nurses’ perceptions of HPWPs are negatively related to their intention to leave.

HPWPs and organizational cynicism

Organizational cynicism has emerged in the literature demonstrating a negative effect on important outcomes such as, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Eaton, 2000; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003; Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 1994). Building on the definition of Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998), Wilkerson described organizational cynicism as a ‘negative attitude toward one’s employing organization in general, and toward its procedures, processes, and management, that is based on a conviction that these elements generally work against the employee’s best interests’ (Wilkerson, 2002, p. 533). As such, perceptions of cynicism are likely to emanate from equivocal missions, unattainable goals, or even dark leadership. Although organizational cynicism comprises an important negative employee response, limited research has examined its antecedents and outcomes (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2006).

In this study, we argue that nurses’ perceptions of HPWPs influence their organizational cynicism. That is, high perceptions of such work practices will decrease

their organizational cynicism. In contrast, limited HPWPs are likely to foster elevated levels of organizational cynicism. More specifically, employees who realize that their organization does not emphasize and implement effective recruitment and selection methods may perceive that it demonstrates low procedural justice (Wu & Chaturvedi, 2009), namely feelings of fairness regarding organizational procedures. Given that organizational cynicism refers to employees' negative attitude toward the organization emanating from their perceptions that it lacks fairness and integrity (Dean et al., 1998) we postulate that low HPWPs will lead to increased organizational cynicism. In a similar sense, appraisal and reward procedures that demonstrate low levels of fairness and transparency with regard to the decision-making will also result in increased organizational cynicism. Relatedly, prior research has suggested the relationship between organizational justice and organizational cynicism (Bernerth, Armenakis, Feild, & Walker, 2007; Chiaburu et al., 2013).

Furthermore, providing employees with appropriate training practices, rewards, and a high sense of job security is likely to lessen employees' organizational cynicism. This can be largely explained by social exchange (Blau, 1964) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1995). That is, employees who perceive that their organization offers important benefits and fulfills their part of the psychological contract will tend to reciprocate by exhibiting positive attitudes and behaviors (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008; Kuvaas, 2008). Conversely, employees who consider that their organization provides limited opportunities for training and development, inadequate rewards, and limited job security will experience low levels of organizational support and high levels of psychological breach and therefore will become more cynical toward their organizations (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

At a more general level, scholars have noted that 'treating workers with respect and as capable and intelligent individuals, organizations will find that workers will be more committed to the organization and more trusting of management' (Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005, pp. 77–78) and also may signal that it perceives employees as a valuable organizational asset. Last, health care research has indicated that HPWPs are positively related to organizational commitment (Boselie, 2010; Macky & Boxall, 2007) and social identification (Bartram, Karimi, Leggat, & Stanton, 2014). Consequently, following the above theoretical and empirical research we propose that HPWPs will be negatively associated with nurses' organizational cynicism.

Hypothesis 2: Nurses' perceptions of HPWPs are negatively related to their organizational cynicism.

HPWPs, organizational cynicism and intention to leave

Thus far, we have suggested that HPWPs are likely to result in lower nurses' intention to leave (Hypothesis 1) and organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 2).

In addition, Mobley (1977) has argued that individuals start to think about the turnover process based on their evaluation about their workplace and their job. In this regard, employees' negative perceptions and evaluations are likely to trigger such reactions. Given that employees with high levels of organizational cynicism will demonstrate negative attitudes toward their organization and job, we anticipate that organizational cynicism may lead to elevated intentions to leave the organization.

Furthermore, scholars have suggested, although not proposing mediating effects, that positive work experiences diminish organizational cynicism and the latter affects intention to quit (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Given that HPWPs may comprise such positive experiences and based on aforementioned propositions, we posit that organizational cynicism may serve as a mediator in the relationship between HPWPs and nurses' intention to leave. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Nurses' organizational cynicism mediates the negative relationship between perceived HPWPs and their intention to leave.

HRM-related educational background as a moderator

Educational background affects an individual's way of thinking and behaving (Tikka, Kuitunen, & Tynys, 2000). In recent years, there is a growing interest among nurses in obtaining knowledge and skills about managing people in health care settings. This is attributed to the numerous health management courses worldwide and the respective demand from nurses to attend these courses in order to climb the hierarchical ladder. In doing so, several nurses significantly familiarize themselves with HRM-related knowledge and issues. Along this line of reasoning, research has argued that educational background may influence nurses' job perceptions (Danni & Wei, 2011; Swart, 2012). Likewise, McCleary and Brown (2003) suggested that research-related education was positively related to positive attitudes toward research among nurses.

Using person–environment fit, we propose the moderating role of HRM-related educational background in the relationship between HPWPs and organizational cynicism. Person–environment fit is a broad concept which refers to the compatibility between one's characteristics and his or her environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

One dimension of personal environment fit relates to the person–organization fit which concerns the congruence between an employee's personal attributes and values and his or her organization's culture and values (Cable & DeRue, 2002). When employees consider that there is a match between them, they will tend to exhibit positive reactions (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In contrast, incongruence between employee's and organizational attributes will instigate undesirable employee outcomes (Tong, Wang, & Peng, 2015).

In this regard, we anticipate that nurses who have HRM-related education have been instilled with respective values and ideas and therefore expect from the hospital to implement pertinent policies and practices. If these nurses consider that there is a limited focus and implementation of HPWPs, there will experience a mismatch between their values and organizational values which, in turn, will promote negative attitudes toward the organization such as organizational cynicism. Following the above argumentation, we form the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Nurses' HRM-related educational background moderates the relationship between perceived HPWPs and organizational cynicism such that the relationship is stronger when nurses have HRM-related educational background compared to nurses who do not have HRM-related educational background.

In light of the above hypotheses, we propose and test a moderated mediation model. As mentioned earlier, we postulated that nurses' organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between perceived HPWPs and nurses' intention to leave. In addition, it is suggested that nurses' HRM-related educational background will moderate the relationship between perceived HPWPs and organizational cynicism. Taken together, we expect that the indirect effect of HPWPs on nurses' intention to leave through organizational cynicism is contingent on their HRM-related educational background. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Nurses' HRM-related educational background moderates the indirect relationship between perceived HPWPs and their intention to leave via organizational cynicism such that the relationship is stronger when nurses have HRM-related educational background compared to nurses who do not have HRM-related educational background.

Method

Sample and procedure

We collected our data from four private hospitals in Cyprus during October–November 2014. One of the authors contacted the respective Human Resource departments which in turn allocated the questionnaires. Nurses who completed the anonymous questionnaires returned them in sealed envelopes. In aggregate, from the 350 nurses employed in these hospitals, 299 responded yielding a rate of approximately 85.7%. Among the respondents, 67.9% were females and the mean age was approximately 30 years old. In addition, the majority of the sample (71.9%) held a bachelor's degree. More than half of the sample (63.5%) was employed in a permanent basis. Also, the mean job experience was 7.4 years and the organizational tenure was 5.1 years. Last, 23.1% of the respondents have attended HRM-related modules.

Measures

In this study, all measures used a five-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. All scale reliabilities (Cronbach alpha) were acceptable (Table 1), exceeding the value (.70) recommended by Nunnally, Bernstein, and Berge (1967).

High-performance work practice

Following the extant literature (e.g. Boselie, Dietz, & Boon, 2005), we selected five core HPWPs namely recruitment and selection, training and development, appraisal, rewards, and job security. The vast majority of the items (Appendix A) were taken from Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, and Takeuchi (2007). Job security was measured using one item from Chang and Chen (2011). In total, we used 11 items to assess the aforementioned HPWPs. Given that scholars have argued that it may be better to view different practices of HRM as distinct but related dimensions of HPWPs we contrasted our five-dimensional model with the unidimensional model. The results demonstrated that the latter fit the data significantly better compared to the five-dimensional model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 8.98, p < .05$). As such, consistent with other empirical studies (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Takeuchi et al., 2007; Zacharatos et al., 2005) we used the single-factor solution. The respective items demonstrated high factor loadings from .53 to .82. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .89.

Organizational cynicism

Organizational cynicism was measured using four items which described the cognitive dimension of cynicism developed by Brandes, Dharwadkar, and Dean (1999; cited in Kim, Bateman, Gilbreath, & Andersson, 2009). An example item for this scale is 'I believe top management says one thing and does another'. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .80.

Intention to leave

We assessed nurses' intention to leave using two items from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983). Sample item is 'I often think about quitting'. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .87.

HRM-related educational background

We measured HRM-related educational background by asking respondents if they have completed HRM modules in relation to their education (0 = yes, 1 = no).

Control variables. We also controlled for six demographic variables namely gender, age, education, employment status, job, and organizational tenure. Given that only age had significant bivariate correlations with our outcomes, we used this specific demographic variable in our analysis (Becker, 2005).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	.68	.47									
2. Age	30.28	6.83	.15**								
3. Educational level	2.07	.58	.04	-.07							
4. Employment status	1.36	.48	.05	-.13*	-.12*						
5. Job experience	7.29	6.49	.17**	.89**	-.02	-.10					
6. Organizational tenure	5.08	4.50	.11	.75**	.01	-.19**	.83**				
7. HPWPs	3.40	.67	-.04	.05	-.05	-.03	.04	-.03	(.89)		
8. Organizational cynicism	3.18	.77	-.11	-.02	-.02	.06	-.06	-.03	-.15**	(.80)	
9. Nurses' intention to leave	2.42	1.17	-.07	-.14*	.01	.08	-.13	-.03	-.24**	.32**	(.87)
10. HRM-related educational background	.77	.42	-.04	.07	-.31**	.01	.02	.03	-.08	.01	-.01

Note: Internal reliabilities (alpha coefficients) for the constructs are given in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$.

Analysis

To test the present hypotheses we utilized bootstrapping analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) and Sobel test (1982). Furthermore, SPSS macro developed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) was used in order to examine the moderating role of HRM-related educational background in the present relationships.

Results

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for all variables are presented in Table 1. Perceived HPWPs are negatively related to organizational cynicism ($r = -.15, p < .001$), and intention to leave ($r = -.24, p < .001$). Additionally, organizational cynicism is positively associated with intention to leave ($r = .32, p < .001$).

Confirmatory factor analysis

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis indicated that our measurement model provided a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 [111] = 295.93, p < .01, TLI = .91, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .08$). Moreover, to ensure discriminant validity we contrasted our model against alternative models. The results (Table 2) showed that our model fitted the data significantly better than the alternative models. Hence, these results offered support for the distinctiveness of our constructs. As regards common method bias, we conducted Harman's single factor (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). The results showed a poor fit for the single-factor solution ($\chi^2 [307] = 935.64, p < .01, TLI = .61, CFI = .67, RMSEA = .16$). As a consequence, common method bias may not constitute a pervasive problem in the present study.

Hypothesis tests

Test of mediation

Table 3 presents the results of bootstrapping analysis and Sobel test. Bootstrap results supported our first hypothesis which stated that nurses' perceptions of HPWPs have a negative effect on their intention to leave ($B = -.42, p < .01$). Similarly, the results reported a negative relationship between HPWPs and

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis.

Model	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
<i>Four-factor model</i>	295.93	111	.91	.93	.08
Two-factor model: HPWPs and organizational cynicism	685.38	113	.72	.77	.13
Two-factor model: HPWs and nurses' intention to leave	575.40	113	.78	.82	.12
Two-factor model: organizational cynicism and nurses' intention to leave	528.62	113	.80	.83	.11
One-factor model	935.64	114	.61	.67	.16

Notes: TLI is the Tucker–Lewis index; CFI the comparative fit index; and RMSEA the root-mean-square error of approximation.

Table 3. Regression analysis.

Variables	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>		
Nurses' intention to leave regressed on HPWPs	-.42	.10	-4.33	.00		
Organizational cynicism on HPWPs	-.17	.07	-2.65	.01		
Nurses' intention to leave regressed on organizational cynicism, controlling for HPWPs	.44	.08	5.38	.00		
Nurses' intention to leave regressed on HPWPs, controlling for organizational cynicism	-.34	.09	-3.65	.01		
	Value	SE	L95% CI	U95% CI	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect effect and significance using normal distribution Sobel	-.08	.03	-.14	-.01	-2.34	.05
	<i>M</i>	SE	L95% CI	U95% CI	<i>R</i> ²	
Bootstrap results for indirect effect	-.07	.03	-.17	-.02	.16	

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample size 1000. L = lower limit; U = upper limit, CI = confidence interval.

organizational cynicism ($B = -.17, p < .01$). Thus, we found support for the second hypothesis. Last, regarding our mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 3), the results demonstrated that organizational cynicism serves as a mediating mechanism that associates perceived HPWPs with nurses' intention to leave. Specifically, bootstrapping analysis (1000 bootstrap samples with 95% confidence intervals) – which has the advantage that it does not assume the normality of the sampling distribution and it is appropriate for small samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) – supported the indirect effect since it does not contain zero ($-.17, -.02$). Similarly, Sobel test – which assumes a normal distribution – corroborated this indirect effect (Sobel, $z = -2.34, p < .05$).

As regards our fourth hypothesis, we examine the interaction of perceived HPWPs with nurses' HRM-related educational background in explaining their organizational cynicism. Before proceeding with the specific analysis, both variables were mean-centered in order to mitigate the potential effect of multicollinearity. The results (Table 4) supported this hypothesis ($\beta = .33, p < .05$) demonstrating that across nurses with HRM-related educational background the negative association is larger compared to those nurses without such educational background. In order to further explore this interaction, we conducted slope analysis. The results indicated that for nurses' with HRM-related educational background there is a significant negative association between HPWPs with organizational cynicism ($\beta = -.43, p < .01$), whereas for those without such education this relationship is not significant ($\beta = -.10, n.s.$). As shown in Figure 2 we plotted this interaction effect (Aiken & West, 1991). Hence, fourth hypothesis was also supported. Last, our fifth hypothesis stated that the indirect effect of perceived HPWPs on nurses' intention to leave through organizational cynicism is dependent on HRM-related educational background. The results supported this moderated mediation hypothesis since the indirect effect was significant for nurses with such an educational background (effect = $-.19, p < .01$; CI between $-.34$ and $-.08$), but it was not significant across nurses without HRM-related educational background (effect = $-.04, n.s.$; CI between $-.13$ and $.03$) (Table 5).

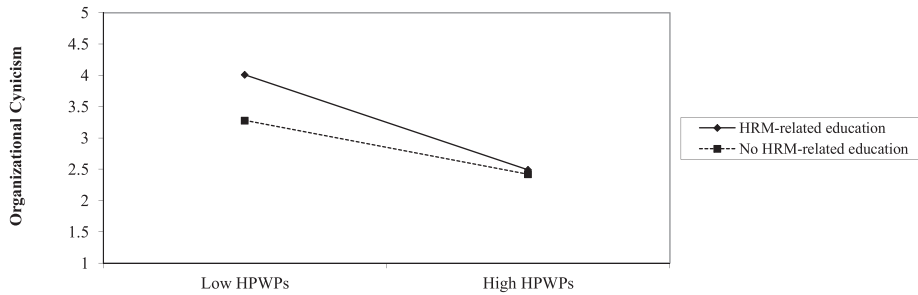


Figure 2. Interaction between HPWPs and HRM-related education on organizational cynicism.

Table 4. Moderated regression analysis.

	Organizational cynicism
<i>Control variables</i>	
Constant	3.27
Age	-.01
HPWPs	-.76**
HRM-related educational background	-.03
HPWPs * HRM-related educational background	.33*
Adjusted R^2	.04*

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 5. Moderated mediation results for the indirect effect of HPWPs on nurses' intention to leave via organizational cynicism.

Moderator		Conditional indirect effect	Standard error	Z	p
HRM-related educational background	Yes	-.19	.07	2.83	.01
	No	-.04	.04	1.06	.31

Discussion

In the literature, HPWPs have been found to be related to employees' intention to leave across industries (Bergiel et al., 2009; García-Chas et al., 2014; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Jyoti et al., 2015; Lam et al., 2009). By the same token, recent empirical research has investigated this association in the nursing context (Ang et al., 2013). Consistent with these studies, our findings support the role that HPWPs play in diminishing nurses' intention to leave. In explaining this relationship, we demonstrate the mediating role of a nascent, albeit important, negative attitude that is organizational cynicism. As such, the present study sheds new light on this relationship by demonstrating that HPWPs are likely to alleviate nurses' cynical attitudes towards the hospital and, as a result, reduce their intention to leave. Put differently, hospitals which do not implement such contemporary practices trigger nurses' organizational cynicism which, in turn, enhances their intention to leave the hospital. These findings extend previous research which has focused on positive underlying mechanisms in linking HPWPs and intention to leave (Bergiel

et al., 2009; García-Chas et al., 2014; Guchait & Cho, 2010; Jyoti et al., 2015; Lam et al., 2009). On a related note, the present findings support and add to recent propositions that positive and negative work experiences affect organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013) by highlighting the role of HPWPs.

Furthermore, the above studies have provided insight into the mediating mechanisms that explain this effect. However, very little is known about the boundary conditions that may influence the relationship between HPWPs and intention to leave. Using person–environment fit as a theoretical lens, we underscore the moderating role of nurses' HRM-related educational background. According to our results, the direct effect of perceived HPWPs on organizational cynicism and ultimately intention to leave is significant only for nurses with HRM-related educational background. Therefore, these findings add to the scant literature which examines boundary conditions in the relationship between perceived HPWPs and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Fan et al., 2014; Zhang, Zhu, Dowling, & Bartram, 2013; Wu & Chaturvedi, 2009). By extension, this is the first study in the HRM literature, to the best of the authors' knowledge, which examines the significant role that the specific demographic variable may play in affecting the association between HPWPs and employees' outcomes.

Taken together, the present study developed a moderated mediation model which aims to provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between perceived HPWPs and nurses' intention to leave by simultaneously clarifying why (organizational cynicism) and when (HRM-related educational background) this association occurs. In doing so, it contributes to the limited research on HPWPs that examines complex models. Last, our findings showed that perceived HPWPs and intention to leave constitute important antecedents and outcomes of organizational cynicism, respectively, thus enhancing organizational cynicism literature in general and, particularly, in nursing.

Practical implications

The present findings offer some useful implications for hospitals and human resource managers. First, they showed that nurses' perceptions of HPWPs are of pivotal importance regarding their attitudes and behaviors. Namely, nurses who consider that their hospital implements such work practices experience lower levels of both organizational cynicism and intention to leave. As such, contemporary HRM practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development, appraisal, rewards, and job security comprise useful tools for diminishing nurses' organizational cynicism and increasing the possibility of staying in the hospital. Regarding the latter, given the severe economic and psychological costs related to nursing turnover rates (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2015; Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Hayes et al., 2012) hospital top management and human resource managers should pay attention to such work practices. In doing so, hospitals could cultivate

a workplace that shows respect and recognition towards their nurses and aims to instill high-performing values.

As regards the relationship between organizational cynicism and nurses' intention to leave, if hospitals wish to retain their nursing workforce they should focus on promoting a trusting, sincere and ethical culture thus lessening organizational cynicism and, in turn, leading nurses to remain in the hospital. Scholars have argued that psychological contract violation and higher levels of organizational politics may enhance employees' perceptions of organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013). As such, hospital management needs to be cognizant of the detrimental effect of creating such an unfavorable workplace. In contrast, building a favorable and people-oriented hospital environment will result in lower intention to leave among nurses.

An additional fruitful implication of our findings pertains to the HRM-related educational background of nurses. According to the present results, nurses that have attended HRM modules in their education are more inclined to respond positively to HPWPs compared to those without such education. That is, nurses with HRM-related education will experience lower levels of both organizational cynicism and, in turn, intention to leave when hospitals implement such work practices. On the contrary, HPWPs have a non-significant indirect effect on intention to leave through organizational cynicism among nurses without HRM-related education. Therefore, recruiting nurses with such educational background may be beneficial for hospitals which adopt HPWPs because these nurses will experience less organizational cynicism and consequently lower intentions to leave the hospital. Furthermore, this interaction suggests that providing nurses with training and HRM seminars is likely to offer important returns on investment regarding their attitude towards the hospital and their turnover intentions.

Limitations and future research

Like all studies, our research is not without limitations. First, the present study adopted a cross-sectional analysis and therefore did not offer strong evidence regarding the causality of the relationships. Second, we collected data using self-report questionnaires from a single source (nurses). As such, common method bias may occur. Although scholars (Evans, 1985) have argued that interaction effects are likely to attenuate such bias and despite our attempt to assess this effect by conducting a statistical test, we cannot exclude this possibility. Additionally, we measured HRM-related educational background using one item which is fairly generic because it does not delve into the content of the HRM modules. Last, our study was conducted in a specific context namely Cyprus. Consequently, we should be cautious about generalizing these findings to other countries.

Future studies could utilize a longitudinal design in order to provide more robust causal relationships and mitigate common method variance. Another fruitful area for future research would be to examine the present relationships

in different contexts and therefore enhance the generalizability of the results. Moreover, future research could examine the effect of perceived HPWPs on different mediators and outcomes. In doing so, future empirical research could also test the appropriateness of the use of a unidimensional measure compared to the multidimensional. In addition, future studies could offer more evidence with regard to the moderating role of HRM-related educational background in the relationship between HPWPs and nurses' attitudes and behaviors.

Given the dearth on organizational cynicism in the health care literature, future studies could also investigate the effect of this attitudinal variable on other important health care outcomes such as patient satisfaction or service quality. Last, HRM-related educational background has received very limited attention in the literature. With this in mind, it is essential that further research could benefit from examining the moderating role of this variable regarding the relationship between HPWPs and different nurses' outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment or organizational support.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study set out to advance our understanding into the relationship between perceived HPWPs and nurses' intention to leave. As such, we encompassed organizational cynicism as an underlying mechanism that accounts for this association. Additionally, this mediated effect was examined across nurses' HRM-related educational background. Data from private hospitals supported our hypotheses showing that perceived HPWPs have both direct and indirect, via organizational cynicism, effect on nurses' intention to leave and further this indirect effect is contingent on whether nurses have HRM-related educational background. Specifically, the indirect effect was significant only for nurses who have such a background.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix A

HPWPs items	Factor loading
Selection is comprehensive (uses interviews, tests, etc.)	.60
Selection involves screening many job candidates	.61
Selection emphasizes their ability to collaborate and work in teams	.60
Training is continuous	.62
Training programs are comprehensive	.73
Training programs strive to develop firm-specific skills and knowledge	.71
Performance is based on objective, quantifiable results	.82
Performance appraisals include management by objective with mutual goal setting	.82
Performance appraisals include developmental feedback	.80
Our compensations include high wages	.53
Employees are worried about getting laid off anytime (r)	.66