

HRM practices and innovative work behavior within the hotel industry in Pakistan: Harmonious passion as a mediator

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Abstract

Innovative work behavior (IWB) forms an essential basis for obtaining competitive advantage and long-term success for organizations. Empirical research on this behavior has received limited attention in hospitality context. This study tests a conceptual model that examines how IWB can be transpired through the different aspects of HRM practices (i.e., service training, servicing empowerment, participation in decision making) via harmonious passion. Two hundred and twenty full-time employees who worked in the four- and five-star hotels in Pakistan participated in the study. The findings reported significant mediating effect of harmonious passion between the three aspects of HRM practices and IWB.

Keywords: HRM practices; harmonious passion; innovative work behavior; hospitality industry

Introduction [AQ2](#)

Hospitality industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today and has been recognized as a major driver for countries' economic growth (Henderson, Avis, & Tsui, 2018). The growth in this industry has brought new set of challenges and opportunities especially within the service setting (Narayanan & Rajaratnam, 2004). This industry has been shown to be one of the most important sectors in contributing to Pakistan's economy (Euromonitor, 2018). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's report of 2017, Pakistan's tourism and hospitality sector contributed 7% of GDP which generated revenue of worth

19.4 USD billion dollars (Manzoor, Wei, Asif, Haq, & Rehamn, 2019). As a result, the high growth has helped hoteliers to benefit from the increasing supply of rooms, and the competition among hotels has substantially increased in Pakistan (Saleem, Yaseen, & Wasaya, 2018).

In the last few years, Pakistan has attempted to remain competitive using various business opportunities in adapting to such an environment. In response to such challenges within the context of frontline employees, hotel firms need employees who can serve customers better and who are able to tackle issues during unexpected situations. This translates to innovative work behavior (IWB) among its service employees that will contribute to long-term business success (Afsar, Masood, & Umrani, 2019). Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) in this study refers to the efforts of frontline employees' generation, promotion, and implementation of creative ideas after the recognition of potential customers' problems during service encounters (Stock, 2015). In other words, it is a creative behavior exhibited by employees when encountering unexpected issues when dealing with customers. Employees displaying such critical behaviors in hospitality firms help improve overall service innovativeness (Baradarani & Kilic, 2018), display higher job performance, and influence customers' loyalty and their satisfaction (Kim & Lee, 2013; Sousa, Coelho, & Guillamon-Saorin, 2012).

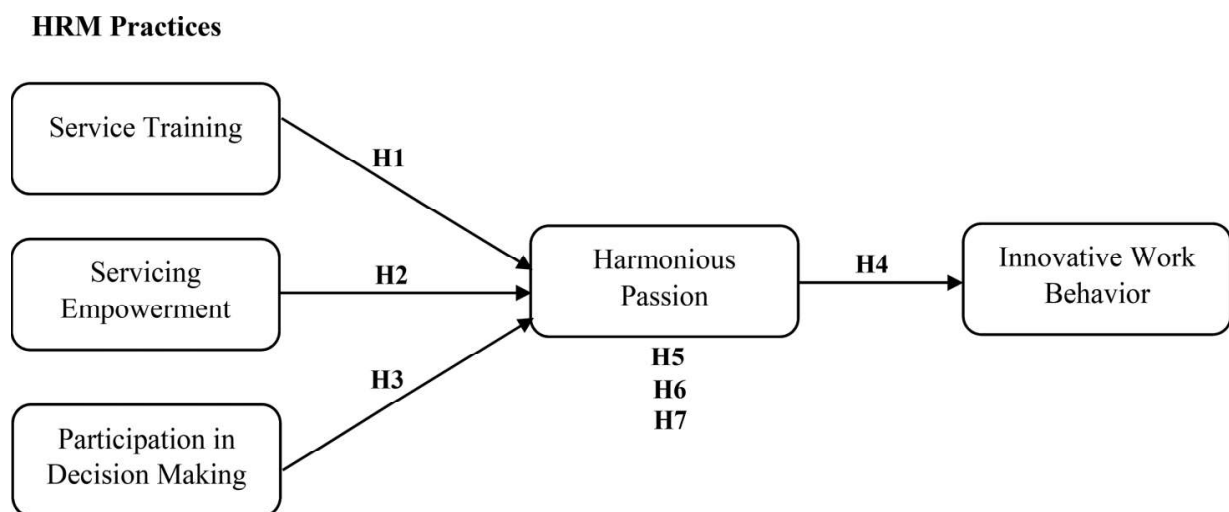
Surprisingly, considering the supreme role of employees' IWB in meeting customers' expectations in the hotel industry, existing literature has mostly emphasized work role performance and little on IWB (Lee & Hyun, 2016). In recent times, organizations have realized the importance of IWB in creating unique and enjoyable experiences for customers to meet their needs in the hospitality industry (Stock, Jong, & Zacharias, 2017). Hence, there have been calls for more research on innovation among frontline employees (Slatten, Svensson, & Svaeri, 2011). In searching ways for hotels to increase IWB among their frontline employees, the role of human resources and management play crucial roles (Gomezelj, 2016; Ottenbacher, 2007). Within the service setting, because of the close interaction between the employees and customers, human resources play an important role in identifying customers' needs that may propel them to be creative and innovative (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). And HRM practices play a fundamental role in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors (Nassar, 2018; Tuzun & Kalemci, 2018), resulting in higher employee commitment, satisfaction thereby leading to more creative and innovative behavior in the workplace (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Researchers suggest that these aspects of HRM practices (e.g., service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making) are important determinations of employee IWB (Bos-Nehles, Renkema, & Janssen, 2017). Such HRM practices play a key role to promote employee motivational factors (Aktar & Pangil, 2018; Shin, Jeong, & Bae, 2018), which in turn positively influence their extra role behaviors (Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2014a). However, research to unearth mediating mechanisms through which HRM practices impact individual innovative behaviors is scarce in the literature (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017) despite that fact that HRM practices indirectly influence employees' behaviors with motivational states of employees (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013). To address this limitation, this study identified harmonious passion for work to be a motivational mechanism linking HRM practices and IWB in this study.

Harmonious passion for work refers to a strong inclination toward the work which the individual like, considers important and involve in that work by investing time and energy (Burke, Jeng, Koyuncu, &

Fiksenbau, 2011). Researchers have shown keen interest in exploring the worth of harmonious passion in organizational setting recently. It has been considered a source of energy that drives behavior because of people dedicating themselves fully to an activity to achieve higher performance (Vallerand et al., 2003). However, the literature has not thoroughly explored how specific HRM practices can be related to harmonious passion (David, 2012). Recent studies have shown that, harmonious passion is a force in hotel employees that pushes them to invest their efforts by improving customer services (Chen, Lyu, Li, & Li, 2017), and are more involved in IWB in hotel firms (Luu, 2019). Thus, drawing from self-determination theory (SDT), the purpose of this study is to identify harmonious passion as a mediator between three aspects of HRM practices and IWB. The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the effect of HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making on frontline employees' harmonious passion.
2. To determine the effect of harmonious passion on frontline employees' IWB.
3. To analyze the mediating role of harmonious passion between HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision and frontline employees' IWB (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proposed model.



Review of the literature and hypotheses development

Innovative work behavior (IWB)

Innovative work behavior is defined as the ability of employees to generate, promote and implement novel and useful ideas at work (Scott & Bruce, 1994). According to Yuan and Woodman (2010), it is a complex process that not only requires the generation of ideas, but also gaining social acceptance, support of the

decision makers and gaining others' cooperation for the implementation of ideas. IWB has been a crucial topic since its initial development (Li & Hsu, 2016), and in the last decade plethora of studies have been published in top impact factor journals at an accelerated rate (Caniels & Veld, 2016; Dhar, 2016; Yuan & Woodman, 2010), indicating strongly that this behavior is exceptionally crucial for the survival and high performance of organizations in this competitive and technological era. Scholars have argued that, there could be several valid reasons for the drastic increase investigating this construct in organizational settings. It has been considered to be a critical part for firms to remain competitive in the global market (Montani, Courcy, & Vandenberghe, 2017), enhancing service quality and meeting customers' expectations (Luoh, Tsaur, & Tang, 2014).

Given the multiple benefits, several studies have been conducted in different industries that attempted to gain more understanding of the factors that influence employees' IWB (Caniels & Veld, 2016; Javed, Bashir, Rawwas, & Arjoon, 2017; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Despite the significant and pivotal role of IWB (Chen, 2017), very few studies have highlighted its impact in the hospitality industry (Lee & Hyun, 2016) particularly in hotels (Chang, Way, & Cheng, 2017; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). Recent studies have started to examine and understand employee IWB at hospitality industry (Jung & Yoon, 2018; Kim, Karatepe, & Lee, 2018; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2015). The above-mentioned studies use various organizational and motivational factors including, leadership, psychological capital and work engagement that may influence IWB. However, not much is known about these essential factors such as HRM practices and harmonious passion in hospitality research. Thus, there is call for research to investigate the role of HRM practices with underlying mechanisms in the hospitality industry to predict IWB (Chang et al. 2017). This study therefore intends to fill this gap by applying SDT theory, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

HRM service training, servicing empowerment, participation in decision making and harmonious passion

Human resource management (HRM) practices are tools that organizations use to manage human capital such that they come up with better behaviors consistent with organizational strategies (Wang, Hsu, Li, & Lin, 2018). These practices include training and development, compensation, empowerment, participation in decision making, selective staffing, job security, teamwork and performance appraisals (Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2014b; Tang & Tang, 2012). But most important and critical HRM practices that have been considered as the most influential for the frontline employees in the hospitality firms are, service training and servicing empowerment (Tang & Tang, 2012). In addition, employee participation in decision making has emerged as a strategic HRM practice and is considered one of the best HRM practices (Akhtar, Ding, & Ge, 2008). Thus, a careful examination of the current literature suggests that service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making are the most important HRM practices that have been or need to be studied with employees' behaviors in the hotel industry (Afsar, Shahjehan, & Shah, 2018; Karatepe, 2013; Kim, Tavitiyaman, & Kim, 2009; Murphy, Torres, Ingram, & Hutchinson, 2018). Accordingly, in this study HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making are used as core dimensions of HRM practices to predict frontline employees' harmonious passion.

Service training

Service training in this study refers to making necessary investments to improve the frontline employees' skills for providing better services to customers (Boshoff & Allen, 2000). It has been considered one of the most important dimensions of HRM practices in the hospitality industry (Karatepe, 2013) which has been linked to enhancing various employees' positive attitudes such as engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2018), job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2009) and employee commitment (Dhar, 2015). Consequently, it is argued that service training among the frontline employees would enhance their harmonious passion in this study. When employees have comprehensive training practices, they acquire necessary job related knowledge and customer skills to effectively perform their work (Chen et al., 2017) which should enhance their control over the work (Snell & Dean, 1992). Employees who have control over their work are more likely to autonomously internalize their work into their identities and experience high levels of harmonious passion (Forest et al., 2012). Recent study conducted among students in a university in Nairobi, Kenya, training impacted their harmonious passion (Gielnik, Uy, Funken, & Bischoff, 2017).

Hypothesis 1: HRM service training has a positive relationship with harmonious passion.

Servicing empowerment

Servicing empowerment in this study refers to giving frontline employees some sort of discretion and power such that frontline employees are enabled to provide satisfactory services to their customers by responding to their needs and demands (Chan & Lam, 2011). It has been linked to various positive employees' attitudes, such as employee satisfaction (He, Murrmann, & Perdue, 2010), work engagement (Karatepe, 2013) and affective commitment (Nayak, Sahoo, & Mohanty, 2018). Therefore, empowerment can equally impact employees' potential outcomes such as harmonious passion. Self-determination theory suggests that autonomy support has an impact on employees' harmonious passion such as an autonomous internalization of work (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2003). This is because, when employees are empowered, they take ownership and pride in their work which will develop sense of their autonomy at work (Deci & Ryan, 2008), resulting in enhancing their harmonious passion. Moreover, in a very recent study the empowering role of leaders has resulted in enhancing employees' harmonious passion (Hao, He, & Long, 2018). These findings mentioned give us an understanding to conclude that empowerment among frontline employees will result in enhancing their harmonious passion.

Hypothesis 2: HRM servicing empowerment has a positive relationship with harmonious passion

Participation in decision making

Participation in decision making is a type of involvement, allowing employees to share their inputs or make decisions on important issues (Bayraktar, Araci, Karacay, & Calisir, 2017). Participation in decision making has been linked with various employees' motivational factors such as engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2018), organizational commitment (Cheung & Wu, 2011) and employee motivation (Irawanto, 2015). Given that

participation has been linked with similar motivating factors, it can also foster employees' harmonious passion in this study. For example, scholars have highlighted the potential and tremendous impact of participation in decision making in multiple studies claiming that, when employees are given opportunity in making decisions for important organizational issues, their level of motivation increases, and they are amenable to invest more energy and time in the organization (Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010). Further, this relationship was explained by scholars in their studies claiming that, when employees are encouraged to participate in decision making such as problem solving and goal setting, their harmonious passion would increase (Chen et al., 2017). Hence, it is proposed that;

Hypothesis 3: HRM participation in decision making has a positive relationship with harmonious passion.

Harmonious passion and IWB

Harmonious passion including both cognitive and affective elements refers to autonomous motivation and enjoyment at work (Ho, Tony, Lee, Dubreuil, & Forest, 2018; Liu, Chen, & Yao, 2011), both of which are significant predictors of employee IWB (Gao, 2017; Orth & Volmer, 2017). Those individuals who enjoy and have positive feelings toward their work come up with diverse and unique ideas (Shipton, West, Parkes, Dawson, & Patterson, 2006). Specifically, empirical evidence has demonstrated that autonomous motivation is related to prosocial behavior (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2001), and more importantly IWB (Gao, 2017). The following effects of autonomous motivation on IWB can be analyzed from the following aspects.

First, autonomous motivation results in more interests, persistence in performing the tasks, resulting in higher work effort (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2001), which is essential for job performance, that requires employee creativity (Liu et al., 2011). Second, according to Gao (2017), autonomously motivated employees work harder to achieve organizational tasks, can adjust to difficult situations and have ability to face challenges, take risks, all of these facilitate idea generation, promotion and implementation, therefore impacting employees' IWB. Thus, any individual who acts with a full sense of choice (e.g., is autonomously motivated) experiences more positive states and displays more satisfaction toward the job (Gillet, Gagné, Sauvagère, & Fouquereau, 2013). Job satisfaction is an important predictor of employee IWB (Shipton et al., 2006). In the context of frontline employees in service firms, specifically hotels, scholars have regarded harmonious passion a strength that pushes them to involve in innovative behaviors for the sake of meeting customers' demands and expectations (Luu, 2019). Building on recent research in which harmonious passion was related with employees' IWB, thus it is proposed that;

Hypothesis 4: Harmonious passion has a positive relationship with IWB.

Harmonious passion as a mediator

SDT provides a sound theoretical explanation of the direct influence of HRM practices (service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making) on employee harmonious passion. According to SDT, it is not only the nature of work because of which the individual feels passionate, but the social

context also has an influence on it (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2003). This happens when the social context supports the individual's autonomous motivation, impacting individual's harmonious passion (Chen et al., 2017). Research has demonstrated that service training and servicing empowerment contribute to the satisfaction of three basic needs and increase employee autonomous motivation (Karatepe, Yavas, Babakus, & Deitz, 2018). And harmonious passion develops when they perceive an autonomous internalization of work (Vallerand et al., 2003). Therefore, the presence of HRM practices in the work setting in the shape of service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making may influence employees' harmonious passion in this study. For instance, scholars have stated that if service firms wish to increase their employees' harmonious passion, they need to provide them with training (Chen, Chang, & Wang, 2018; David, 2012), give them more empowerment and involve them in decision making (Chen et al., 2017). More importantly, in a recent study, HRM practices were related to frontline employees' harmonious passion (Chen et al., 2017).

Similarly, harmonious passion is a strong motivating factor that is related to IWB (Luu, 2019). It generates joy, excitement, pleasure and energy at work among employees (Gaan, 2015), enabling them to make associations between different concepts and come up with new ideas that enhances their level of creativity (Gielnik et al., 2017). Further, it boosts employees' energy and fosters fulfillment, which enables them to accomplish their tasks in a flexible manner, thus increasing their engagement at work (Trepanier, Fernet, Austin, Forest, & Vallerand, 2014). Apart from the reasons mentioned above, empirical studies have shown that harmonious passion is related to extra role behaviors such as, proactive customer service performance (Chen et al., 2017), organizational citizenship behavior (Ho et al., 2018) and most importantly employee IWB (Luu, 2019).

Consequently, integrating the positive link between harmonious passion and IWB with the positive link between HRM practices and employee harmonious passion discussed earlier, this study suggests that positive indirect relationship between HRM practices and IWB via harmonious passion. Similar to hypothesized in a recent study, where harmonious passion mediated the relationship between HRM practices and employee extra role behavior (Chen et al., 2017), thus, it is proposed that;

Hypothesis 5: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM service training and IWB.

Hypothesis 6: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM servicing empowerment and IWB.

Hypothesis 7: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM participation in decision making and IWB.

Methodology

Participants and procedure

Data were collected from 220 full-time employees working in 16 -four and five-star hotels located in major

cities of Pakistan. The hotels were chosen from the list provided by Pakistan Hotel Association (PHA). The list also provided the star rating, contact details and location of each hotel. Only four- and five-star hotels were chosen for this study because of three reasons. First, the focus of this research on four and five-star was because of the intensity of these hotels in-house innovation (Leonidou, Leonidou, Fotiadis, & Zeriti, 2013). Second, it was expected that these upscale hotels are influenced by certain HRM practices, that might not be seen in smaller hotels with lower ratings in Pakistan (Ahmad & Zafar, 2018). Third, it has been emphasized that employees in four- and five-star hotels are required to satisfy customers' needs and higher expectations than other lower scale hotels (Teng, 2019), thus such context was suitable for the investigation of frontline employees' IWB.

Prior to the survey, approvals were sought from the human resource (HR) managers of 19 four-and five-star hotels via email and asked them to participate in this study survey. The author also followed up these managers on the phone. Out of 19, only 16 HR managers agreed to participate in the study. From the selected hotels' management showing interest and permission, cover letters were sent to those hotels, and later meetings were held to discuss the purpose and objectives of the study with HR managers. In the cover letter, the purpose and benefits of this study were clearly explained. This study also assured the confidentiality of the responses by ensuring that those responses would only be used for research purposes. In similar vein, HR managers were briefed accordingly. Demographic information such as age, education, gender and work experience were included in the first section of the survey questionnaire. Measures of HRM practices, harmonious passion and IWB were added in the second section. Though all 16 hotels agreed to participate in this study, the researchers were not allowed to directly meet or contact frontline employees. Therefore, HR managers and their representatives were instructed to distribute the questionnaires across a broad range of frontline employees who had intense interaction with customers (e.g., front desk agents, reservation representatives, guest relation representatives, wait staff etc.). Further, they also specified the number of frontline employees working in their hotels at least for one year and were sent sufficient copies of the questionnaire. Participants were then required to return the questionnaire after three weeks to their HR managers and representatives. The questionnaires were to be returned in the envelope provided in a sealed manner, the HR department then informed the researcher to collect the questionnaires. A total of 407 questionnaires were distributed.

Instruments

The instruments were chosen based on the suitability for the study context. The English language of the original scales was retained, consistent with past studies in the Pakistan hospitality industry which retained the original English language of the instruments in their studies (Bibi & Jadoon, 2018; Javed et al., 2017).

HRM service training was measured by six items adapted from Boshoff and Allen (2000). The scale ranged from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree). Participants indicated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each item (e.g., "I am trained to deal with customer complaints").

HRM servicing empowerment was measured with five items adapted from Hayes (1994). The scale ranged

from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree). An example of the items is "I have control over how I solve hotel customer's problems".

HRM participation in decision making was measured by four items adapted from Delery and Doty (1996). The scale ranged from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree). An example of the items included is "I am often asked by my managers to make decisions".

Harmonious passion was measured by seven items originally developed by Vallerand et al. (2003). The scale ranged from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree). An example of the items is "This work allows me to live memorable experiences".

Innovative Work Behavior was measured with six items taken from Hu, Horng, and Sun (2009). The scale ranged from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree). An example of the items is "I come up with innovative and creative ideas in this hotel".

Results

Sample characteristics

Questionnaires were sent out to 407 employees to collaborate to the study and 262 surveys were filled and returned out of which 220 were useful and were used for further analysis (no missing values) resulting in an overall response rate of 54 per cent. The remaining 42 data were not included in the analysis due to missing data. Of the 220 employees, most were males ($N = 125$, 56.8%) as compared to females. The majority of employees were between 26 to 30 years old ($N = 57$, 25.9%), In terms of academic qualification, majority had bachelor's degree ($N = 121$, 55%), and regarding the work experience in their hotels, most had experience of 3 to 5 years ($N = 79$, 35.9%). Table 1 displays the employee profile of this study.

Table 1. Employee profile (N = 220).

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 125 | 56.8 |
| Female | 95 | 43.1 |
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| 18–20 years | 5 | 2.2 |
| 21–25 years | 40 | 18.1 |
| 26–30 years | 57 | 25.9 |
| 31–35 years | 37 | 16.8 |
| 36–40 years | 42 | 19 |
| 41–50 years | 31 | 14 |

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 51 above | 8 | 3.6 |
| <i>Academic qualification</i> | | |
| Intermediate | 56 | 25.4 |
| Bachelors | 121 | 55 |
| Masters | 43 | 19.5 |
| <i>Work Experience</i> | | |
| 1–2 years | 65 | 29.5 |
| 3–5 years | 79 | 35.9 |
| 6–10 years | 59 | 26.8 |
| More than 10 years | 17 | 7.7 |

Analysis strategy

For the data analysis in this study, partial least squares (PLS) with smart PLS 3.2.7 version was used. This software is a form of regression analysis (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), and is appropriate when investigating several constructs and their relationship to the dependent variable. In addition, PLS-SEM has been regarded an appropriate analysis tool for the development of theories, by focusing on explaining the variance in the dependent variables while examining the model (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). Accordingly, given that the conceptual model of this study is based on multiple relationships, which focuses on predicting dependent variable such as IWB and combines theory, such as SDT, PLS-SEM seems to be particularly adequate given the scope of this study. Using Smart PLS, two steps were performed namely; measurement model and structural model.

Measurement model

For reliability, composite reliability (CR) was examined for all constructs. Results indicated that all values were above the cutoff value of 0.70 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). The validity analysis involved convergent and discriminant validity. To assess the convergent validity, at first stage the factor loadings of each item were evaluated. The cut off significant value of 0.5 for loading of each item is recommended by Hair et al. (2014). However, in this study all items were retained, as all items had loadings above the cutoff significant value. Next, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was assessed with the threshold value of minimum 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). In this study, the AVE values ranged from highest 0.724 for servicing empowerment to lowest value of 0.537 for service training. Table 2 displays the values of factor loadings, CR and AVE of each construct.

Table 2. Outer loadings, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE).

| Constructs | Items | Loadings | AVE | CR |
|--|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| Service Training (STR) | | | 0.537 | 0.872 |
| | STR1 | 0.608 | | |
| | STR2 | 0.594 | | |
| | STR3 | 0.71 | | |
| | STR4 | 0.882 | | |
| | STR5 | 0.803 | | |
| | STR6 | 0.757 | | |
| Servicing Empowerment (SEM) | | | 0.724 | 0.929 |
| | SEM1 | 0.837 | | |
| | SEM2 | 0.892 | | |
| | SEM3 | 0.879 | | |
| | SEM4 | 0.869 | | |
| | SEM5 | 0.773 | | |
| Participation in Decision Making (PDM) | | | 0.684 | 0.896 |
| | PDM1 | 0.833 | | |
| | PDM2 | 0.876 | | |
| | PDM3 | 0.885 | | |
| | PDM4 | 0.699 | | |
| Harmonious passion (HP) | | | 0.705 | 0.943 |
| | HP1 | 0.784 | | |
| | HP2 | 0.848 | | |
| | HP3 | 0.872 | | |
| | HP4 | 0.887 | | |
| | HP5 | 0.884 | | |
| | HP6 | 0.859 | | |
| | HP7 | 0.729 | | |
| Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) | | | 0.707 | 0.935 |
| | SIWB1 | 0.83 | | |
| | SIWB2 | 0.841 | | |
| | SIWB3 | 0.902 | | |
| | SIWB4 | 0.892 | | |
| | SIWB5 | 0.86 | | |
| | SIWB6 | 0.706 | | |

Next, this study assessed the discriminant validity via Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Hair et al., 2019). To evaluate Fornell-Larcker criterion, square root of each variable's AVE value was found greater than its correlations with other constructs displayed in Table 3. Apart from using Fornell-Larcker approach to assess discriminant validity, this study used HTMT ratio proposed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015). Two cut-off values of 0.85 and 0.90 for HTMT ratio were recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). Following the cutoff value of 0.85 to establish discriminant validity, in this study all values of HTMT ratio were below the critical value of 0.85 (displayed in Table 4). Hence, this study confirmed discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 3. Assessment of discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker.

| | STR | SEM | PDM | HP | IWB |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| STR | 0.733 | | | | |
| SEM | 0.123 | 0.851 | | | |
| PDM | 0.047 | 0.225 | 0.827 | | |
| HP | 0.275 | 0.493 | 0.244 | 0.84 | |
| IWB | 0.167 | 0.325 | 0.162 | 0.464 | 0.841 |

Notes. Diagonal values represent the square root of average variance extract, while off-diagonal values represent the correlation

Table 4. Assessment of discriminant validity using HTMT.

| | STR | SEM | PDM | HP | IWB |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| STR | [.] | | | | |
| SEM | 0.137 | [.] | | | |
| PDM | 0.092 | 0.262 | [.] | | |
| HP | 0.286 | 0.531 | 0.267 | [.] | |
| IWB | 0.173 | 0.356 | 0.182 | 0.5 | [.] |

Notes. Diagonal values represent the square root of average variance extract, while off-diagonal values represent the correlation

Assessment of the structural model

In this study, the structural model was evaluated using coefficient of determination (R^2) and path coefficients. This study obtained acceptable R^2 for harmonious passion (0.308) and IWB (0.215) based on the recommended cutoff value of 0.10 (Falk & Miller, 1992).

To further, evaluate the significance of path coefficients and investigate the direct relationships between HRM service training, servicing empowering, participation in decision making, harmonious passion and

IWB, PLS-SEM bootstrapping (5000-resample) was used to generate standard errors, bootstrap t-statistics and p-values. Additionally, it has been argued by the recent scholars that p-values are not a good and adequate criterion for testing the significance of the hypotheses in a given study, rather they recommended to report both p-values with confidence intervals and effect sizes (Hahn & Ang, 2017). Thus, for testing the hypotheses, reliable and appropriate criterions were used. The results show that all four hypotheses were supported as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypotheses tests for direct and indirect relationships.

| Hypothesis | Path | β value | S.E | T-value | P-value | Decision | BC 95%LL | BC 95%UL |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------|---------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| <i>Direct Effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| H1 | STR > HP | 0.215 | 0.058 | 3.742 | $p < 0.01$ | Supported | 0.115 | 0.304 |
| H2 | SEM > HP | 0.436 | 0.066 | 6.609 | $p < 0.01$ | Supported | 0.323 | 0.540 |
| H3 | PDM > HP | 0.136 | 0.062 | 2.179 | 0.015 | Supported | 0.030 | 0.235 |
| H4 | HP > IWB | 0.464 | 0.06 | 7.734 | $p < 0.01$ | Supported | 0.353 | 0.552 |
| <i>Indirect Effects</i> | | | | | | | | |
| H5 | STR > HP > IWB | 0.100 | 0.032 | 3.375 | $p < 0.01$ | Supported | 0.045 | 0.157 |
| H6 | SEM > HP > IWB | 0.202 | 0.042 | 4.783 | $p < 0.01$ | Supported | 0.126 | 0.289 |
| H7 | PDM > HP > IWB | 0.063 | 0.031 | 2.003 | 0.032 | Supported | 0.015 | 0.116 |

Note. SL, Servant leadership; HPW, Harmonious passion for work; CSE, Creative self-efficacy; SIWB, Service Innovative work behavior

Hypothesis 1: HRM service training has a positive relationship with harmonious passion.

Hypothesis 1 was established to investigate the relationship of HRM service training on frontline employees' harmonious passion. The result showed of this hypothesis were supported and showed a positive and significant relationship between these constructs ($\beta = .215$, $t = 3.742$, $p < 0.01$, $f^2 = 0.066$). This means that more the frontline employees in the hotel setting are trained well to provide satisfactory services to customers, more likely they will be harmoniously passionate toward their work.

Hypothesis 2: HRM servicing empowerment has a positive relationship with harmonious passion

The results indicated that HRM servicing empowerment a has positive and significant relationship with frontline employees' harmonious passion ($\beta = .436$, $t = 6.609$, $p < 0.01$, $f^2 = 0.258$) and thus the hypothesis was supported. This finding implies that, frontline employees who are empowered to solve customers' problems, show more harmonious passion toward their work, thus supporting hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3: HRM participation in decision making has a positive relationship with harmonious

passion.

Hypothesis 3 was developed to examine the impact of participation in decision making on harmonious passion. Result of the said relationship is positive and significant ($\beta = .136$, $t = 2.179$, $p < 0.05$, $f^2 = 0.025$) thus the hypothesis is supported. This signifies that when frontline employees are allowed to participate in decision making, they show harmonious passion toward their work.

Hypothesis 4: Harmonious passion has a positive relationship with IWB.

Hypothesis 4 postulated that harmonious passion has a positive relationship with IWB. As predicted, the results show that harmonious passion is positively related with IWB ($\beta = .464$, $t = 7.734$, $p < 0.01$, $f^2 = 0.274$), supporting *H4*. This means that when frontline employees show harmonious passion toward the work, they are involved in IWB.

Mediation analysis

Mediator exists when a predictor affects a dependent variable indirectly through at least one intervening variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). For mediating assessment, this study followed Preacher and Hayes (2008)' method. Under this technique, bootstrapping method is used to assess the significance of mediation relationship (indirect effects). Bootstrapping method is a powerful technique in assessing the significance of mediation analysis in a given study (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2013). The t-values were recognized significant when they exceeded the critical value of 1.96 in this study. In addition, Preacher and Hayes (2008) suggested that the indirect effects confirmed the existence of mediating effects in case of the absence of "0" value in between confidence interval. Table 5 shows the results of mediation analysis of *H5–H7*.

Hypothesis 5: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM service training and IWB.

H5 was established to test the mediating effect of harmonious passion between service training and IWB. The path coefficients and t-statistics results show that this relationship is significant

($\beta = .10$, $t = 3.375$, $p < 0.01$, $BC_{0.95}LL = 0.045$ and $UL = 0.157$), thus supporting *H5*.

Hypothesis 6: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM servicing empowerment and IWB.

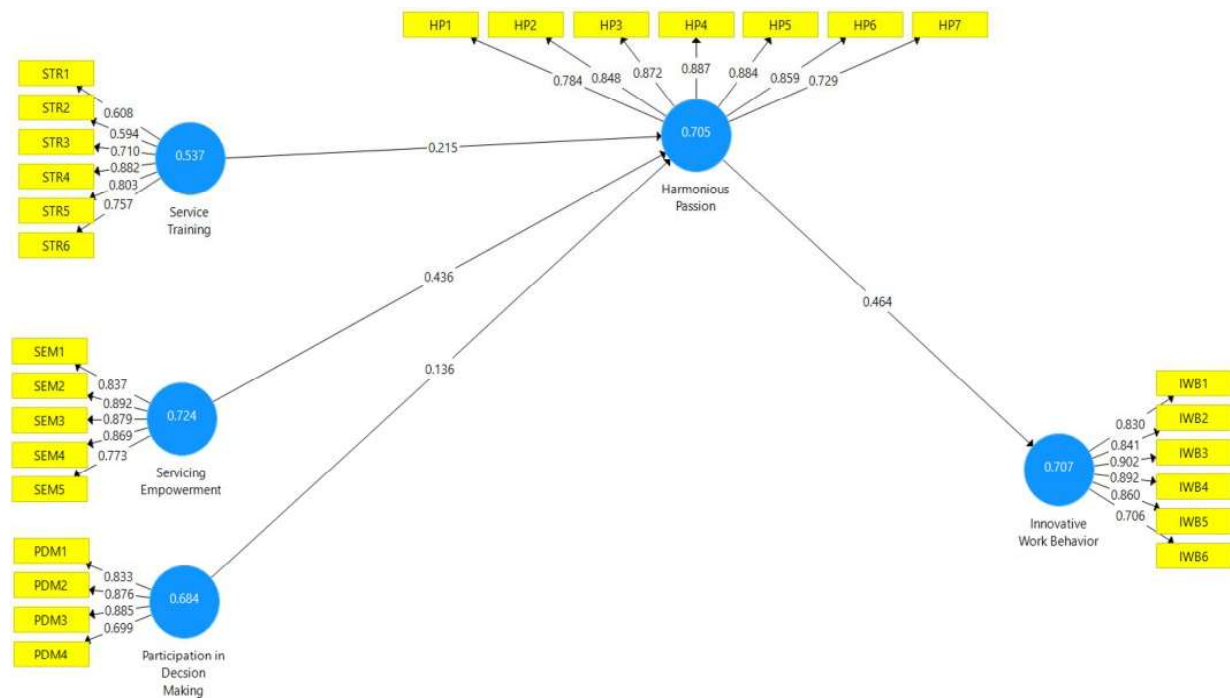
Likewise, *H6* was supported, stating that servicing empowerment relationship with IWB is mediated by harmonious passion ($\beta = .202$, $t = 4.783$, $p < 0.01$, $BC_{0.95}LL = 0.126$ and $UL = 0.289$).

Hypothesis 7: Harmonious passion mediates the relationship between HRM participation in decision making and IWB.

H7 Harmonious passion is a mediator of the relationship between participation in decision making and IWB.

The path coefficients and t-statistics show that this relationship is significant ($\beta = .063$, $t = 2.003$, $p < 0.05$, $BC_{0.95}LL = 0.015$ and $UL = 0.116$). Thus the hypothesis is supported (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Results of the hypothesized relationships.



Discussion

Promoting IWB among the frontline employees in hospitable firms is conducive to long-term survival and competitiveness (Chang et al., 2017). Recognizing the influential role of human resources to involve in such critical behavior requires a work environment where there are certain HRM practices and policies (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Thus, this study tested a research model that investigated the impact of individual HRM practices on frontline employees' IWB via harmonious passion. The structural equation modeling results of this study lent support to the above-mentioned relationships.

First, this study examined the relationship between HRM practices and harmonious passion. Results reveal that all three HRM practices (i.e., service training, servicing empowerment, participation in decision making) are significant predictors of employee harmonious passion. It is understood that all HRM practices perceived by frontline employees working in hotels inspired them to be involved in their jobs and enjoy gaining pleasuring performing them. This study's finding is line with the results of a recent study by Chen et al. (2017), that HRM practices can positively impact employees' harmonious passion in the hotel setting. Findings are also in line with SDT theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), suggesting that service training, and

servicing empowerment contribute to the satisfaction of three basic needs and increase employee autonomous motivation (Karatepe et al., 2018). And harmonious passion emerges when employees perceive an autonomous internalization of work (Vallerand et al., 2003). It seems that through service training programs, frontline employees acquire necessary job related knowledge and customer skills to effectively perform their work (Chen et al., 2017) which should enhance their control over the work (Snell & Dean, 1992). Those employees who have the control over their work likely autonomously internalize their work into their identities and experience harmonious passion (Forest, Mageau, Sarrazin, & Morin, 2011). Similarly, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making practices implemented in hotels firms increase the level of employees' motivation and they get more energy and invest more time performing their tasks (Chen et al., 2017), thus developing harmonious passion. This suggests that frontline employees in the hospitality industry to perceive themselves as passionate members in terms of devoting time and energy in their work, there is necessity for management to provide them with effective and constructive trainings, give them more empowerment and involve them in decision making.

Second, the results also suggest that harmonious passion leads to IWB which signifies that employees with harmonious passion would like to display creative and innovative behaviors. This finding echoes with a recent study in the context of hospitality industry. For example according to Luu (2019), frontline employees showing harmonious passion toward their work, are more eager to invest their efforts for the sake of improving customer services and are more involved in innovative behaviors. Harmonious passion developed in employees enables them to enjoy high level of pleasure, excitement, enthusiasm and love for the work (Amiot, Vallerand, & Blanchard, 2006), which prompts them to fully engage in their work and demonstrate creative and innovative behaviors (Liu et al., 2011; Shi, 2012). The positive effect of harmonious passion on employees' IWB is in line with broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), which state that positive feelings and enthusiasm develop cognitions and actions, thereby leading to more creative and innovative outcomes at work (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004; Shipton et al., 2006). In the context of hotel firms, the main aim of frontline employees is to serve customers better, where passionate employees engage in customer service (Chen, 2017), and exhibit high levels of IWB (Luu, 2019). Simply put, they are ready to demonstrate extra role performance behavior to meet and exceed customers' expectations (Chen et al., 2017). In the hospitality industry, studies have investigated different and variety of motivational antecedents of employees' IWB, including work engagement (Orth & Volmer, 2017), creative self-efficacy (Slatten, 2014), and psychological capital (Kim et al., 2018). The present study offers new insights and identifies harmonious passion as a critical antecedent that stimulates frontline employees' IWB in an under-researched context such as Pakistan.

On testing hypothesis five (H5), six (H6) and seven (H7) for mediation analysis, the findings demonstrate that harmonious passion functions as a mediator between HRM training, servicing empowerment, participation in decision making and employees' IWB. Consistent with prior studies, harmonious passion acts as a potential mediating mechanism between HRM practices and extra role behaviors in hotel setting (Chen et al., 2017). Overall, this states the processes in which HRM practices play a role in influencing employees' internal motivation and innovative work behavior. Through the indirect significant relationship

between HRM practices and employees' innovative work behavior, it shows that when employees of hotel firms receive actions from management in the shape of sufficient training through encouragement and the opportunity to be part of the hotel firms by being involved in some decision making, this allows employees to be more knowledgeable, skillful, autonomous, and display growth alongside with the development of the hotel firms. This in turn propels employees to reciprocate through greater amount of investment in their energies, love, enthusiasm in their tasks or work which are derived internally and making sure they perform well at work (Lee, Idris, & Delfabbro, 2017). This further suggests that, HRM training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making applied in hotel firms ensure that employees have necessary skills and job-related knowledge to perform their tasks, provide employees with flexible job assignments, and finally create a supporting work environment by showing care and recognition. With aforementioned treatment, frontline employees in the workplace engage more without any fear of being controlled. As a result, they develop harmonious passionate toward their work (Chen et al., 2017). As a consequence, these harmoniously passionate, trained and empowered frontline employees feel motivated to put extra effort and contribute their personal resources in the quest of hotel managements' effectiveness. For instance, they get ready to demonstrate extra role behaviors including IWB to meet and exceed the customers' expectations.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study confirm that the objectives of this study were achieved. The first objective was to examine the effects of HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making on frontline employees' harmonious passion. The results demonstrated that these three aspects of HRM practices positively predicted harmonious passion. The second objective of this study was to determine the effect of harmonious passion on frontline employees' IWB. The findings significantly indicate the positive effect of harmonious passion on frontline employees' IWB. These findings are in line with prior research and literature. The final objective of this study was to analyze the mediating role of harmonious passion between HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision and frontline employees' IWB. The results indicate that harmonious passion mediated the effects of HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making on frontline employees' IWB. These findings significantly lend support to the mediating role of harmonious passion between these HRM practices and frontline employees' IWB. Hence, this study showed that with better HRM practices employed in hotel firms, frontline employees would show positive motivational attitude such as harmonious passion toward involving in innovative behaviors.

Theoretical contributions

This study makes several contributions with regard to theoretical perspective. First, this study underpins SDT in advancing IWB among frontline employees within the hotel industry through HRM lens. As expected, our study indicates that harmonious passion is an important mediator between HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision and IWB. As this theory postulates that social

context plays a vital role in bringing passion in individuals toward the work (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2003). The findings support and expand SDT's belief about the importance of HRM practices as crucial component of the environmental conditions that play a significant role in bringing harmonious passion (Chen et al., 2017). Further, in accordance with SDT, harmonious passion emerges when employees perceive an autonomous internalization of work (Vallerand et al., 2003) thus leading to creative and innovative outcomes (Gao, 2017; Liu et al., 2011).

Second, extant research has wholly focused on the cognitive mechanisms underlying the motivational effects of HRM practices, revealing the mediating roles of a variety of factors such as creative self-efficacy (Liu, Zhou, & Ren, 2015), psychological safety (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017), and psychological empowerment (Bonias, Bartram, Leggat, & Stanton, 2010). In contrast, harmonious passion does not only capture the cognitive element of motivation, but affective and behavioral elements as well (Hao et al., 2018). It is a hybrid motivational state, and its mediating effects as demonstrated in this study provides the first piece of empirical evidence highlighting the importance of an affective, behavioral, and cognitive explanation for the effectiveness of different aspects of HRM practices.

Third, earlier passion research has generated insights into IWB and creativity (Shi, 2012; Liu et al., 2011), while research has ignored IWB among employees in hospitality industry. Frontline employees IWB is a means to make hotel firms gain superior performance, and is of interest to academicians and practitioners in the hotel firms on account of the contribution of IWB in agile responsiveness to changing needs of customer demands (Slatten, 2014), intense market competition (Ottenbacher, 2007) and adding value to existing firms service offerings (Chen, 2017). Thus, this research extends the passion literature in service domain.

Finally, despite the widespread discussion on IWB and creativity among workforce in literature in European and Western countries, its implications and discussion in Asian context remains largely unexplored (Hon, 2011). With that stated, scholars have urged Asian countries to develop their workforce creative potential in such a way that they contribute for innovative economy (Muhamad, Sulaiman, & Saputra, 2018). Findings from the previous research studies may not apply to developing countries such as Pakistan. As such a study on IWB among frontline employees in Pakistan, a developing context in Asia would certainly help expand the extant literature.

Practical implications

This study offers several practical implications for the frontline employees and managers in the hospitality industry. First, the hotel industry should make practical use of HRM training programs that are aimed at improving learning, skills and professional growth of frontline employees by including creative and skill-building sessions. For example, hotel management should incorporate *customer refresher training courses* which are developed to reduce employees' burnout by providing employees with up to date information about new methods of dealing with customers and providing them information of changes in customers' expectations; *creative thinking courses* which are used to develop essential skills for generating ideas by introducing fun-activities, video representation techniques; and finally *brainstorming sessions* which are

useful for providing open and flexible environment that encourages everyone to participate fully and helping them develop creative ideas without being criticized. In order to make these sessions successful, hotel management need to equip their trainers and trainees with updated customer information and creative materials used in the training sessions. Communicating effectively that these training programs are to develop employees' skills for the purpose of getting them promoted within the hotel rather than controlling their behavior can be a good way to make them feel that they are important and valuable in their organization. Additionally, with respect to Pakistan hotel industry, it has been reported that communication skills are an important factor in dealing better with foreign customers and need to be improved (Yasmin, Sarkar, & Sohail, 2016 [AQ4](#)). Therefore, hotel industry in Pakistan should include communication skills courses in their training programs that should be focused to improve both the verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Improving their skills on how to use persuasive messages, speaking politely to customers, speaking English words with fluency (e.g., improving pronunciation skills) and teaching them the non-verbal messages that are used in different cultures with different meanings would enable them to communicate effectively with customers. Training is not fully successful and effective if attention is only given to when how and what design is used, but effectiveness depends on who gives or provides the training. Therefore, it should be made sure that trainers are selected internally and those who are passionate toward training. Internal managers who are selected for training would be able to provide more tacit knowledge to their frontline employees such as help them understand the policies and rules of hotel firms by sharing their wisdom and experiences. Such knowledge obtained from trainers' experiences and wisdom would enable participants integrate their previous knowledge with the new one, thereby allowing them to act and think in new ways. Next, managers who are passionate trainers may have positive expectations of the hotel firms, and strong intention to communicate with their employees, which may be inspiring for them to understand and develop passion for training. As a result, the participants will make a positive appraisal and also recognize the meaning of the training sessions, resulting in more learnings and skills derived from such sessions.

One other key essential implication relates to the important role that servicing empowerment can play in enhancing employees' harmonious passion and service IWB in this study. It is imperative that hotel management properly plan strategies for empowering their employees, as it is not easy to assign responsibilities and delegate more power to them, while expecting them to deliver well with their existing salaries in the hospitality firms (Biron & Bamberger, 2011). For example, management of hotels, especially their direct supervisors should encourage and praise the efforts of employees when they deliver outstanding services to customers which is beyond their normal job scope. Given the dynamic nature of customers' issues and demands, some customer service issues are not found in customer handling guidelines. As such, managers may also allow employees to tackle various intricate customer service issues according to their discernment but making sure employees do not cross boundaries in delivering good customer service to customers. Furthermore, management of hotels can strengthen the flow of two-way communication between themselves and their employees by providing avenues for employees to provide input for various service issues that may arise. Managers in this regard should assist them in getting access to adequate resources, provide them more knowledge and train them on how they can practice their empowerment roles

ideally. In terms of providing them flexibility, it is essential that managers clearly communicate the ways or indicate the circumstances under which they are allowed to practice empowerment while maintaining an appropriate level of autonomy (Luoh et al.,2014) to minimize their level of burden and excessive costs for these firms. And it should not merely be limited to giving them empowerment, but the extent to which frontline employees successfully and effectively deal with customers' requests and complaints should be appreciated and rewarded. And it is imperative that managers should inform them about the rewards before they perform their duties to practice their empowerment roles ideally. Assigning them acting charge of managers for some time by giving them the authority to act like managers in some specified shifts would be an additional motivational strategy of rewarding them. With such acting roles, they would develop managerial skills and feel they are valued and given importance for their performance, may generate high harmonious passion and involve more in IWB. All these strategies contain elements of employee empowerment.

Finally, acknowledging that policies and practices are often bureaucratic in Pakistani firms with centralized decision making (Ahmad, Raziq, Rehman, & Allen,2019), that provide very limited opportunities for employees of Pakistan to involve in decision making, an indicator of empowerment, there is a need to address this. Therefore, hotel management needs to be aware that the policies of their firms contain elements of empowerment. One of the policies may include allowing frontline employees to make certain decisions within their capacities and capabilities, rather than always relying back to the organization or leaders to make decisions. For instance, leaders or managers in each department may create a flexible and creative work environment, when they are approachable and readily available so that employees feel more comfortable when sharing their useful ideas and suggestions. This allows frontline employees to feel empowered at work and make decisions where needed without hesitation and fear. Further, it is important that hotel managers arrange weekly or monthly meetings in which all employees are invited and asked to discuss their concerns on the job and share their useful ideas for improving service quality issues. Arranging these gatherings will not only help them share their useful ideas, or problems they have on the job, but will increase their social interaction with other members by exchanging diverse knowledge on various issues may serve a good avenue for them to be more creative and innovative. It is possible that some employees may hesitate to share their ideas in meetings or groups, managers in this regard can arrange one-on-one discussion sessions in which employees and their managers may not only listen to their ideas for service improvement but also their problems that they might have. Managers or their immediate supervisors in this regard should boost their confidence in motivating them to come up with new ideas by verbally persuading them that they are creative, praise them with great ideas, teach them with mistakes they make an idea or suggestion. Giving them feedback on their useful suggestions and ideas may be a good way to let them feel they are important and empowered.

Deploying such HRM practices in hotel firms could serve important catalyst for frontline employees' motivation and their innovative capability. As such, HRM service training, servicing empowerment and participation in decision making reflect supportive, skill-development, recognition building and autonomy supportive environment toward the frontline employees would have an impact on the way the frontline employees love, enjoy their tasks and such positive feelings will motivate them to involve in innovative

activities for sake of enhancing customers' experience.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

This study acquaints researchers and practitioners with regard to IWB among frontline employees, yet several limitations are in order to be highlighted. First, this study's cross-sectional design deterred the researchers to form stronger casual inferences. Hence, future researchers should apply longitudinal research design to test the casual relationship among the variables in which same measures are assessed repeatedly over time (Holland, 1986). Second, the findings derived from respondents from the hotel firms in four-and five-star hotels of Pakistan limit the generalization of these findings to other service firms, such as airline, restaurants, telecommunication, banking, and health industry. The current research model should be generalized and replicated in other service firms and other countries rather than only hotel firms of Pakistan. Third, although this study was focused on harmonious passion only, obsessive passion recognizes the existence of other type of passion which refers to an internal pressure to perform an activity, and this results from controlled internalization of an activity (Vallerand et al., 2003). Using the dualistic model for passion, in examining the effects of HRM practices could provide deeper understanding of the mechanisms that allows HRM practices to successfully influence employee behaviors. Similarly, it might be worth investigating how other positive outcomes of HRM practices can be mediated through harmonious and obsessive passion such as proactive work behavior and work crafting. These outcomes are important and are identified as potential outcomes of passion for work (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017; Ma, Zhou, Chen, & Dong, 2018).

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