

# Commitment-based human resource practices, job satisfaction and proactive knowledge-seeking behavior: The moderating role of organizational identification

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Based on social exchange theory and social identification theory, I investigated how employee organizational identification affects the effectiveness of commitment-based human resource (HR) practices. I focused on employee attitudes (job satisfaction) and behaviors (proactive knowledge seeking) as HR practices' outcomes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using a structural equation modeling analytical approach, I tested the hypotheses with data from a web-based cross-sectional survey of 208 specialists and engineers of manufacturing subsidiaries in Poland.

**Findings** – Results showed that the positive relationship between commitment-based HR practices and job satisfaction is weakened for employees strongly identified with the organization. Simultaneously, the connection between seeking knowledge and job satisfaction is stronger and more important for people who identify moderately to strongly.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study limitations regard mainly its cross-sectional design and single cultural and industrial context.

**Practical implications** – From the managerial perspective, the study suggests that to enhance proactive employee behavior, companies need to increase employee organizational identification and ensure that employees have a positive perception of the implemented HR practices.

**Originality/value** – The study contributes to the ongoing discussion on whether individual contingencies affect the effectiveness of commitment-based HR practices in the form of individual attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The findings revealed that the contingent effect of organizational identification depends on the type of individual outcomes, suggesting that the strength of organizational identification affects how employees decide to reciprocate the organization's attention and investment.

**Keywords** Job satisfaction, Social exchange theory, Social identification theory, Commitment based human resource, Knowledge seeking behavior

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Human resource (HR) practices are one of the main ways managers affect employees' well-being, attitudes, behavior, and further individual and unit-level performance (Jiang, Takeuchi,

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& Lepak, 2013). The commitment-based HR (CB-HR) system treats employees as valuable and unique human capital with an emphasis on developing long-term employer-employee relationships (Lepak & Snell, 2002) and results in positive firm innovation, performance (Allen, Erickson, & Collins, 2013), and HR outcomes (Nieves & Osorio, 2017). On the individual level, the main theoretical explanation of how HR practices affect employees and attitudes is social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964), which argues that if the organization supports employees' needs and expectations, then they are willing to reciprocate the "organization's commitment to them" voluntarily (Whitener, 2001, p. 516) with their attitudes and behaviors. While numerous studies examined the effect of HR practices on attitudes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment; e.g. Edgar & Geare, 2014), only several studies looked at proactive behaviors (Maden, 2015; Elorza, Harris, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2016) but not knowledge-seeking behavior. Knowledge-seeking is a discretionary work behavior that creates learning-related opportunities and increases work effectiveness by enabling access to valuable complementary insights and experiences from co-workers. Knowledge-seeking initializes and directs knowledge flow among employees (Gubbins & Dooley, 2021) and supports knowledge-sharing effectiveness by externalizing knowledge needs in a request. In the recent decade, the importance of knowledge-seeking behavior has grown because "the increasingly interdependent and dynamic nature of work requires daily collaboration with others" (Burmeister, Alterman, Fasbender, & Wang, 2022, p. 1303) and sourcing knowledge from co-workers to get work done with higher quality, react to disturbances faster, and solve problems quicker (Lim, Tai, Bamberger, & Morrison, 2020).

Despite evidence for the positive effect of CB-HR systems on employees, some scholars argue that there are industry or strategy-based boundary conditions to HR practices' effectiveness (Collins & Kehoe, 2017). Moreover, researchers signal that employees also affect the effectiveness of HR practices (Kooij & Boon, 2018), informing about the conditional role of commitment (Yousaf, Sanders, & Yustantio, 2018) or identification (Mostafa, Bottomley, Gould-Williams, Abouarghoub, & Lythreatis, 2019). Those results suggest a need to further examine the employee-related contingencies of HR effectiveness concerning positive work attitudes and proactive behaviors. In the present research, organizational identification is an employee-related contingent factor under study. It represents how employees define themselves regarding perceived affiliation with an organization and how they sense who they are (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Therefore, having in mind the importance of job satisfaction as a component of individual well-being, which organizations aim to sustain and proactive knowledge-seeking behavior as a behavior initiating intraorganizational knowledge flow, the present study seeks to answer the following question: How does the organizational identification of employees affect the relationships between CB-HR practices and employees job satisfaction and knowledge-seeking behavior? To address this question, I conducted a cross-sectional survey among 208 specialists working in four manufacturing-based subsidiaries located in Poland. This study concentrates on subsidiary workers as they are overlooked (Lindsay, Sheehan, Cieri, Lindsay, Sheehan, & Cieri, 2017), even though the MNEs subsidiaries employ 22 million European Union workers (in Poland, 2.1 million, 45% in the manufacturing industry) (GUS, 2022).

From the theoretical perspective, I aimed to integrate insights from two theories, social exchange theory (SET) and social identification theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), in predicting positive work attitudes (job satisfaction) and proactive behavior (knowledge-seeking). Those theories conceptualize and explain the effects of the psychological relationships between employees and employing organizations differently. While SET focuses on how the employees' evaluation of the relationship quality the organization develops with them (e.g. with HR practices) influences job-related attitudes and behaviors, SIT draws attention to the role of an extent of individual attachment to the organization in forming and expressing the individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Integrating social exchange

and social identification perspectives, previously studied extensively in isolation, allows for a better understanding of how different psychological relationships between individuals and their organizations predict employee behavior (Van Knippenberg, Van Dick, & Tavares, 2007). The previous results on the integration of SET and SIT have yielded inconsistent results, suggesting that a strong organizational identification may either strengthen or weaken an employee's tendency to reciprocate the received organizational treatment. Thus, I aimed to identify the type of interaction effect, whether additive or substitutive, between those psychological employee-organization relationships, depending on the type of employee outcome. Figure 1 illustrates the overall conceptual framework.

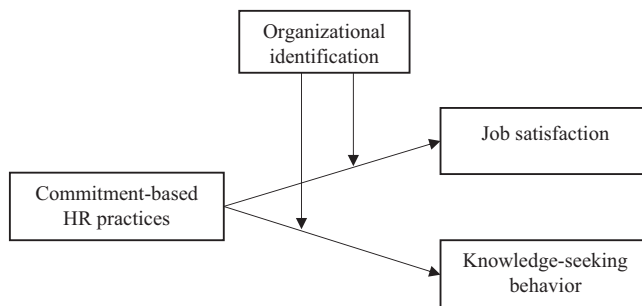
This study contributes to the literature in several ways. Firstly, it adds to the research on individual outcomes of the employee's perceptions of CB-HR practices by examining knowledge-seeking behavior and job satisfaction. Secondly, it advances understanding of the individual-level contingencies of HR practices' effectiveness, specifically by investigating when CB-HR practices are more or less effective concerning job satisfaction and knowledge-seeking behavior. Thirdly, the present study contributes to the stream of research on the effects of integrating the social exchange and social identification perspectives on individual attitudes and behaviors.

The article is structured as follows: The theory and hypotheses section briefly reviews CB-HR practices from the perspective of SET and introduces their relationships with job satisfaction and knowledge-seeking behavior. It also raises the moderating role of organizational identification in those relationships. The method section presents the data collection approach, analytical procedure, and data analyses, followed by the results presentation. Finally, the last section concludes the research by discussing theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and potential paths for further research.

## Theory and hypotheses

### *Commitment-based HR practices and social exchange theory*

When examining the effects of HR practices, researchers indicate that they require analysis as bundles or systems of practices (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012). The HR practices applied in a company represent the aspects of people and employee relationships management to which managers pay particular attention, thus creating the HR system (e.g. Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Flinchbaugh, Li, Luth, & Chadwick, 2016; Al-Amin, Akter, Akter, Uddin, & Mamun, 2021). In the CB-HR system, HR practices aim to create a long-term relationship with employees by "forging psychological links between organizational and employee goals" (Arthur, 1994, p. 672) because, in this view, the human capital is a valuable component of the firm's knowledge base (Lepak & Snell, 2002). By applying CB-HR practices, managers show



Source(s): Own elaboration

Figure 1.  
Conceptual framework

employees that the organization cares for their long-term employment, development, and well-being (e.g. Meijerink, Bos-Nehles, & de Leede, 2020). Specifically, managers apply CB-HR practices to hire and maintain organizationally committed and competent employees who can be trusted in how they perform their tasks based on the assumption that those committed employees would be willing to support the accomplishment of the organizational goals. The commitment-based recruitment and selection practices emphasize the need for person-organization fit, including the alignment with the organizational values and the firm's growth over time (Collins & Kehoe, 2017). The commitment-based development and appraisal practices focus on developing the skills and competencies of employees within an organization over time (Lepak & Snell, 2002). Thus, the CB-HR system comprises extensive general skills training, broadly defined jobs, higher salaries, and comprehensive benefits (Arthur, 1994). With respect to subsidiaries, MNCs apply diversified approaches regarding the decentralization degree of HR practices on the subsidiary level, from the range between two extremes'—standardizing HR practices throughout MNC or localizing them according to the host organization's needs. Recent studies show that subsidiaries conform the HR practices to key institutionalized norms in the host country because the HR function is closely related to the local environment (Stavrou, Parry, Gooderham, Morley, & Lazarova, 2023). Moreover, they also standardize the best HR practices throughout MNC (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007), which allows them locally to diversify from other companies. Therefore, applied in a subsidiary, the HRM system could be a mix of practices specific to the host context and standardized in the MNCs. However, the extent to which a subsidiary can decide about its HR policies and practices is associated with better subsidiary performance via employee behavior (Lazarova, Peretz, & Fried, 2017).

From the employee perspective, SET (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) are the dominant explanations of how and why the CB-HR system affects employee attitudes and behaviors. SET posits that a social exchange relationship forms when one party provides benefits to the other, without specifying the expected form, value, or timing of reciprocation. The resources involved in such exchange, whether economic, social, or emotional, are not pre-determined (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen, & Tetrick, 2009). For the recipient, the perceived value of a favor creates a sense of an obligation (or indebtedness) to reciprocate by doing something for the provider's benefit (Gouldner, 1960). Therefore, employees' positive perception of HR practices can motivate them to reciprocate the organization with their behavior or attitudes. By implementing a bundle of CB-HR practices, organizations establish and support positive social exchange relationships with employees, which "encourage employees to reciprocate by using their abilities and motivation in the pursuit of organizational goals" (Allen *et al.*, 2013, p. 154). CB-HR practices enhance employees' understanding that the organization does something good for them: they perceive greater organizational support (Wahab, Tatoglu, Glaister, & Demirbag, 2021), better job security (Latorre, Guest, Ramos, Gracia, Latorre, & Guest, 2016), or create relational rather than transactional psychological contract with the organization (Uen, Chien, & Yen, 2009). Therefore, the employee's positive perception of CB-HR practices is related to their in-role and organizational citizenship behaviors (Uen *et al.*, 2009), work engagement (Meijerink *et al.*, 2020), effort (Wahab *et al.*, 2021), organizational commitment (Farndale, Hope-Hailey, & Kelliher, 2011), and job satisfaction (Latorre *et al.*, 2016).

However, sometimes, HR systems have different (not always positive) effects on employee outcomes (e.g. Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2008). From SET, scholars argue that the employees' sense of obligation to reciprocate the organization and how they decide to do this depends on the perceived value of the organizational investments in them. Therefore, employee-related factors may affect this perception (Mostafa *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, HR practices might not appear equally beneficial to every individual and they will not motivate individuals equally to put in the effort to exhibit certain behaviors or have a positive attitude in exchange.

*HR practices and job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction is a positive attitude about one's job or job situation (Saks & Gruman, 2014) that reflects "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). It has a positive effect on employee well-being (Pekkan & Bicer, 2022), prosocial behavior in the workplace (e.g. De Clercq, Haq, & Azeem, 2019), and job performance (e.g. Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001). Besides the nature of work itself or individual psychological factors, among the antecedences of job satisfaction, there are also organizational factors like social support, interaction with co-workers, and HR practices (cf., Bowling & Hammond, 2008; Hauff, Alewell, & Hansen, 2014).

However, on the individual level, limited studies examine the link between perceived CB-HR practices and job satisfaction (e.g. Latorre *et al.*, 2016). We may explain this relationship with insight from SET. By introducing HR practices aiming to select and hire employees that fit the organization over the long run and also grow and develop employees within and build an internal community (Collins & Kehoe, 2017), managers inform employees that they care not only for the performance but also for their career plans and are willing to maintain the individual-organizational goal alignment. Thus, employees are more likely to perceive the working environment positively, because an organization will help them grow (Allen *et al.*, 2013), give support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and satisfy their affiliation need. Thus, employees are willing to reciprocate with a positive affective reaction towards the job (Mostafa & Gould-Williams, 2014). Therefore, I hypothesize:

*H1.* CB-HR practices relate positively to employees' job satisfaction.

*HR practices and knowledge-seeking behavior*

Knowledge-seeking behavior is conceptualized as "proactively requesting task-related information, know-how, or feedback from another member" (Haas & Cummings, 2015, p. 37) of an organization to get valuable complementary insight. To source knowledge, employees actively interact with selected knowledgeable individuals (Gubbins & Dooley, 2021) who can help them achieve the desired work-related goals (Lim *et al.*, 2020). Through the knowledge inquiry, individuals take the initiative not only to get a better understanding of their work or problem situation and decrease ambiguity (Grant & Ashford, 2008), but also to perform the work better or improve it by basing on the solutions grounded in an organization (Rudawska & Gadomska-Lila, 2023). Knowledge-seeking can also prepare individuals for future activities by expanding their knowledge and skills (Crans, Bude, Beausaert, & Segers, 2021). This corresponds with proactive behavior, defined as "self-starting, future-oriented behavior that aims to bring about change in one's self or the situation" (Bindl & Parker, 2010).

In line with the arguments of SET, building with CB-HR practices the long-term organization-employees relationships leads to the development of a sense of obligation in employees to act harder for the organization's benefit to repay the favorable treatment. This obligation makes them feel more accountable for their own and organizational performance and makes them willing to act proactively (Caesens, Marique, Hanin, & Stinglhamber, 2016). As Grant and Ashford (2008) proposed, accountability for a goal, task, or group causes an individual to perceive higher potential benefits of performing risky behavior (like proactive) and calculate fewer potential costs related to it. Regarding knowledge-seeking behavior, employees who feel accountable are willing to proactively inquire and gain needed knowledge from co-workers to perform their tasks better, solve problems, or learn. Moreover, with CB-HR practices, employers inform employees that they are essential organizational capital and that their contribution is highly valued. This creates an environment where proactive behavior is welcome (Crant, 2000). Thus, I hypothesize:

*H2.* CB-HR practices relate positively to knowledge-seeking behavior.

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*Contingent role of organizational identification*

Organizational identification captures the linkage between an employee and an organization based on SIT insight (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As a specific form of social identification, organizational identification is a perceptual, cognitive construct. It is an individual's perception of oneness with the organization and being "psychologically intertwined with the fate" of the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). Consequently, employees perceive themselves in terms of the organization's state and the "characteristics they share" with other organizational members (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). In this line, the employees' attitudes and behaviors can be governed by the organization, because the more an individual identifies with it, "the more likely he or she is to take the organization's perspective and act in the organization's best interest" (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000, p. 138). By feeling oneness with the organization, the strongly identified individuals take care of its welfare as their own and perceive organizational success as their own (Blader, Patil, & Packer, 2017).

The way employees define themselves in terms of an employing organization may create the boundary conditions of how the organizational practices will affect their attitudes and behaviors. The previous studies propose two different interaction mechanisms between SET and SIT when predicting employees' outcomes. The first suggests that the combined effect of motivational forces deriving from SET and SIT is "not additive" (Mostafa *et al.*, 2019). On the one hand, the social exchange perspective buffers the adverse effects of low identification by placing a strong sense of obligation to reciprocate, enhancing the active behavior on behalf of the organization. On the other hand, the sense of oneness with the organization of strong identifiers motivates them to behave actively regardless of the level of the social exchange relationship with the organization (Van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2007). Thus, for strongly identified individuals, the social exchange does not play a motivational role in fostering their behavior, because organizational identification implies employee-organization psychological unity. In contrast, in social exchange, an employee and an organization are psychologically separate entities.

However, Tavares, van Knippenberg, and van Dick (2016) propose another mechanism of social exchange and social identity interaction, arguing that even strongly identified individuals recognize the organization as a separate entity. They suggest that the organizational identification of employees "influence the social exchange content and resources (. . .) people choose to reciprocate" (Tavares *et al.*, 2016, p. 36). Thus, the employees' behavior and attitudes can be considered as "social currencies" they use to pay back the organization. In this line, for strongly identified individuals who perceive themselves through the organizational lenses, job dissatisfaction, low loyalty, or turnover intention will not be an attractive social exchange response to the low quality of HR practices because of high self-definition costs. Therefore, for strongly identified individuals, the social exchange processes with job satisfaction (affectional attitude) as an exchange "currency" will be less important. In contrast, the social exchange processes with individual attitudes as reciprocation "currency" will play a more significant role for low-identified employees. On the other hand, initiating proactive knowledge-seeking behavior represents doing something with the aim of change, improvement, and better results (while not doing that does not represent negative self-perceptual consequences). Therefore, when employees strongly identify with the organization and adopt its interests, they are more motivated to engage in proactive behavior (Blader *et al.*, 2017). In turn, this enhances their willingness to reciprocate supportive HR practices with such behavior. In the present study, I assume that job satisfaction (positive, affectional attitude) and knowledge-seeking behavior (proactive behavior) are the different types of "social currencies" individuals reciprocate to their employing organization.



- H3. Organizational identification negatively moderates the relationship between CB-HR practices and job satisfaction in such a way that the link between CB-HR practices and job satisfaction is weakened when the organizational identification is strong.
- H4. Organizational identification positively moderates the relationship between CB-HR practices and knowledge-seeking behavior in such a way that the link between CB-HR practices and knowledge-seeking is strengthened when the organizational identification is strong.

## Method

### *Sample and data collection*

I tested the hypotheses with a sample of 208 knowledge workers from four medium and big-sized manufacturing subsidiaries (automotive accessories, metal products, road safety) located in Central Europe (Poland) of multinational enterprises (MNE). The subsidiaries, each employing over 120 workers, mainly focus on production and distribution. They have been operating for at least a decade. Thus, I assumed that they have developed systems of HR practices (Huselid, 1995).

I collected the data using a cross-sectional survey with self-reported measures that allow for the measurement of variables hard to evaluate by outside observers (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational identification, or the perception of HR practices). Initially, I contacted 50 randomly selected subsidiaries located in the North West of Poland, and eventually, four participated in the study (last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021; the Covid-19 pandemic did not affect participating companies substantially). Based on data from local HR departments, we chose 402 full-time employees who had been working on-site for at least the past six months, using a computer and a formal email for work. An official invitation to participate in the study sent by HR departments with an invitation sent by me to every individual with a questionnaire URL link. The invitation contained a description of the study aims and data usage, assurance about anonymity and confidentiality, voluntariness, withdrawal possibilities, and consent. The final sample included 208 employees (52% response rate), of whom 29% were women and 69% held at least a bachelor's or engineering degree. The average organizational tenure was 8.1 years (54% had tenure higher than eight years), and the average tenure on the position was five years.

### *Measures*

If not stated differently, items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1-totally disagree, 7-totally agree). The questionnaire was in Polish. Therefore, I adopted the translation-back-translation method for items originally in English. To ensure the validity and reliability of the measures, I performed a pilot test on a group of students of management majors working for various organizations.

*CB-HR practices* were measured as employee perceptions using the descriptive observation-based approach (Wang, Kim, Rafferty, & Sanders, 2020), in which individuals evaluated each item on a scale of 1–7 (1-it was not applied; 7-it was applied fully), answering the general question to what extent the following HR practices were applied concerning them or other employees holding a similar position. I adopted the items from Collins and Smith (2006) and Chadwick, Super, and Kwon (2015) and reflected on four groups of HR practices. The interviews with HR practitioners and middle-level managers yielded the exclusion of several practices (e.g. an offering of company shares, job rotation, or team-building training). Finally, the recruitment and selection aspect of HR included three items describing the company's commitment to internal hiring and selecting individuals who can grow with the company ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ). The sample item was: "In the selection process, the company focuses on

the potential of the candidate to learn and grow with the organization.” The incentives and compensation HR component was measured with four items describing the organization-based incentives and the competitive level of salaries ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ), with a sample item: “Employee bonuses or incentive plans are based primarily on the performance of the company.” The appraisal and development HR component was measured with five items regarding employee social integration and adaptation programs, long-term growth, and development of employees ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ). The sample item was: “Performance appraisals are used primarily to set goals for personal development.” I measured the communication HR component with three items regarding communicating the company’s plans and outcomes and obtaining feedback from employees ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). The sample item was: “The company listens to employees’ opinions through different kinds of formal or informal programs (e.g. surveys).” The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the four-dimensional structure of CB-HR measure – the four-factor model ( $\chi^2(83) = 139$ ; CFI = 0.964; RMSEA = 0.057; SRMR = 0.048) was significantly better than the one-factor model. Following the subscale aggregation approach (Chadwick, Super, & Kwon, 2015), I calculated the mean scores of each HR component and then used them as indicators of the CB-HR latent variable ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

*Job satisfaction* was measured with a 3-item scale (Nielsen & Colbert, 2022) with the sample item “All in all, I am satisfied with my job.” Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  was 0.86.

Next, *Knowledge-seeking behavior* conceptualized as proactively requesting co-workers for a different type of knowledge was measured on a 7-point frequency-based scale (1-never; 7-always, it is my daily routine) with four items based on Mohammed and Kamalanabhan (2019) and De Vries, Van Den Hooff, and De Ridder (2006) that refer to the behavior of asking for needed work knowledge, requesting for teaching some skill (like a method of analysis), requesting for remarks regarding the work-related topic and inquiring about some work-related issues ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ). The sample item was “I asked my co-workers for certain knowledge when I needed it.”

*Organizational identification* was measured with five items adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992), with the names of each local company inserted ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ). The sample item was “When someone praises [name of a subsidiary], it feels like a personal compliment.”

Following the prior research, the organizational tenure (in years), tenure on the specific position (in years), educational level (5 educational levels), and the need for creativity in the position (“To what extent is the creativity needed in the work you perform?” on a 5-point scale from 1-not at all to 5-in a very great extent) were the control variables in the models.

### *Common method bias*

Because of the potential concern of common method bias (CMB) (related to the cross-sectional survey and self-reported measures), I applied several a priori activities (e.g. the physical distance between dependent and independent variables and items of the same measure; different anchor labels of the scales; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Moreover, I conducted a post hoc common method variance assessment using Harman’s single-factor test. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that one factor explained 32% of the variance. Hence, CMB should not be a significant problem (Fuller, Simmering, Atinc, Atinc, & Babin, 2016). Moreover, according to the simulation studies, common method variance does not affect the interaction results (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Thus, in the case of the main hypotheses, the concern of CMB was somewhat weakened.

### *Analytical procedure*

First, I calculated the interclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) for dependent variables to evaluate whether their variance size was significantly affected by clustered data structure (employees in different companies). The ICC1s were very low (job satisfaction ICC1 = 0.008; knowledge-seeking



ICC1 = 0.004). Therefore, I conducted single-level analyses (Heck & Thomas, 2020, pp. 36–37). I tested the hypotheses with structural equation modeling (SEM) because of the use of latent variables with multiple indicators (Kline, 2016). I applied the three-step analytic approach starting with the measurement model with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), followed by the direct path model (SEM model 1), and finally, the moderation model (SEM model 2). I used the latent moderated structural equations method (LMS) for moderation analyses, because it enables the moderation of latent variables without needing to compute interaction product terms and has greater power to detect latent interaction effects (Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, 2017). Prior to the interaction, I standardized the moderator (organizational identification). Then, following Aiken and West's (1991) procedure, I did the simple slope test for the situations when the scores of the moderators were at the mean level, one standard deviation above and below the mean. I ran all the analyses with the use of MPlus 8.8 software.

Concerning the sample size, I tested the power analysis for the RMSEA test of not-close fit for the full SEM model (Jak, Jorgensen, Verdam, Oort, & Elffers, 2021). The study's sample size of 208 participants exceeded the minimum recommended sample size of 194, estimated with a significance level of 0.05 and a power level of 0.80.

## Results

### *Measurement model*

I examined a series of CFAs to verify the four-factor hypothesized measurement model and check if all measures were distinct. The analyses showed that the four-factor model with control variables fitted data well ( $\chi^2(145) = 266, p < 0.01$ ; CFI = 0.924; RMSEA = 0.063; SRMR = 0.058) and significantly better than alternative models (Table 1). The CFA revealed sufficient reliability and convergent validity of the measures, as composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.80 to 0.87 (significantly higher than the threshold of 0.60), and average variance extracted (AVE) was equal to or greater than 0.5. Moreover, the square root of each construct's AVE was higher than the correlation coefficients, thus, indicating discriminant validity of the measures (Table 2).

	$\chi^2(\text{df}; p)$	$\Delta \chi^2; p$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC
Model 0: Four factors model; hypothesized	177.53 (97); 0		0.945	0.932	0.063	0.059	10,106
Model 1: One factor model	734.09 (104); 0	556.56; 0	0.573	0.507	0.171	0.121	10,648
Model 2: Two factors model (CB-HR, organizational identification and job satisfaction as one factor)	460.46 (102); 0	282.93; 0	0.757	0.714	0.130	0.088	10,378
Model 3: Three factors model (CB-HR and organizational identification as one factor)	313.98 (100); 0	136.45; 0	0.855	0.826	0.101	0.074	10,236
Model 4: Three factors model (CB-HR and job satisfaction as one factor)	354.23 (100); 0	176.7; 0	0.828	0.793	0.111	0.081	10,276
Model 5: Three factors model (organizational identification and job satisfaction as one factor)	326.17 (100); 0	148.64; 0	0.847	0.816	0.104	0.088	10,248

**Table 1.**  
Alternative  
measurement models

**Note(s):**  $\Delta \chi^2$  is the difference between focal model and model 0; CB-HR = commitment-based human resource practices

**Source(s):** Own elaboration

Variable	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Commitment-based human resource practices	3.64	0.73	0.82	0.54	<i>0.73</i>						
2 Job satisfaction	4.87	0.95	0.87	0.69	0.60	<i>0.83</i>					
3 Knowledge seeking behavior	4.38	0.90	0.80	0.51	0.32	0.21	<i>0.72</i>				
4 Organizational identification	3.93	0.82	0.83	0.50	0.54	0.58	0.30	<i>0.71</i>			
5 Organizational tenure	8.13	4.78			-0.01	-0.12	-0.08	0.02			
6 Tenure on position	5.03	4.19			0.00	-0.04	-0.13	0.12	0.49		
7 Education level	3.20	0.94			-0.13	-0.02	-0.07	0.05	-0.13	0.13	
8 Creativity on position	3.96	0.91			0.13	0.12	0.16	0.19	0.02	0.00	0.04

**Note(s):** Correlation greater than  $\pm 0.13$  are significant at 0.05 level. Values on the diagonal in italics are the square root of AVE values

**Source(s):** Own elaboration

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity estimates

### Testing the hypotheses

With SEM model 1, I tested [hypotheses 1](#) and [2](#) that addressed the direct links between CB-HR practices and individual outcome variables, job satisfaction, and knowledge-seeking behavior ([Table 3](#)). The model exhibited a good fit to data ( $\chi^2(147) = 266.5, p < 0.01$ ; CFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.063; SRMR = 0.058). Results showed that CB-HR practices have a positive link with job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.374; p < 0.01$ ) and a positive but weaker link with proactive knowledge-seeking behavior ( $\beta = 0.191; p < 0.1$ ), which supported [hypotheses 1](#) and [2](#). Moreover, organizational identification was significantly and positively related to both job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.386; p < 0.01$ ) and knowledge-seeking behavior ( $\beta = 0.205; p < 0.01$ ). In the case of control variables, only organizational tenure related negatively to job satisfaction, while tenure on the position was negatively associated with knowledge-seeking behavior.

In SEM model 2, I analyzed the moderation effects of organizational identification. The log-likelihood ratio test showed that SEM model 2 fit the data better than model 1. The analysis revealed that the interaction of CB-HR practices and organizational identification was significant and negative for job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.150; p < 0.01$ ) but significant and positive for knowledge-seeking behavior ( $\beta = 0.134; p < 0.05$ ), providing support for [hypotheses 3](#) and [4](#).

To better understand the moderating effect of organizational identification, I computed and plotted the interaction slopes ([Figures 2 and 3](#)). The strength of the relationship between CB-HR practices and job satisfaction was weaker for employees strongly identified with the organization ( $b = 0.205; p < 0.05$ ) than weakly identified employees ( $b = 0.483; p < 0.001$ ). On the contrary, the strength of the relationship between HR practices and knowledge-seeking behavior is greater for strong identifiers ( $b = 0.337; p < 0.01$ ), while for employees with a low level of organizational identification, the relationship is insignificant ( $b = 0.075; p = 0.495$ ).

### Discussion

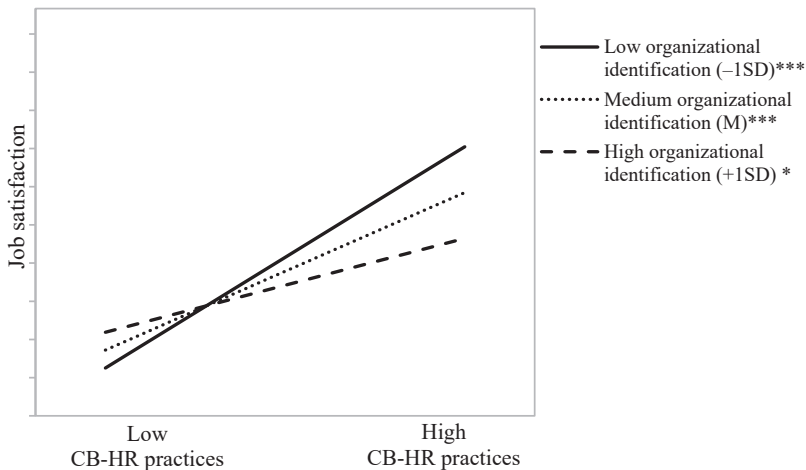
Through an individual perspective, I aimed to understand how an integrated effect of employees' perception of CB-HR practices and their identification with the organization

Dependent variables	SEM model 1				SEM model 2			
	Job satisfaction		Knowledge seeking-behavior		Job satisfaction		Knowledge seeking-behavior	
	Estimates	S.E	Estimates	S.E	Estimates	S.E	Estimates	S.E
<i>Control variables</i>								
Organizational tenure	-0.119*	0.057			-0.127*	0.057		
Tenure on position			-0.145*	0.072			-0.142*	0.070
Education level	-0.005	0.058	-0.043	0.076	-0.022	0.059	-0.028	0.074
Creativity on position	-0.004	0.058	0.099	0.073	-0.013	0.059	0.097	0.074
<i>Independent variables</i>								
CB-HR practices	0.374***	0.078	0.191†	0.102	0.372***	0.078	0.211*	0.099
Organizational identification (OID)	0.386***	0.079	0.205*	0.104	0.370***	0.079	0.244*	0.101
<i>Interaction effect</i>								
CB-HR x OID					-0.150***	0.055	0.134*	0.064
Model fit	$\chi^2(147) = 266.5; CFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.063; SRMR = 0.058$				$-6705.93 (85)$			
Loglikelihood (free par.)					$-6705.93 (85)$			
D ( $\Delta$ free par.); <i>p</i>					11.15 (2); 0.004			
AIC	13,589				13,581			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.46***		0.16**		0.47***		0.22**	

**Note(s):** In the table are standardized estimates. CB-HR practices = commitment-based human resource practices; OID = organizational identification  
 \*\*\**p* < 0.001; \*\**p* < 0.01; \**p* < 0.05; †*p* < 0.1

**Table 3.** Results of SEM models

**Source(s):** Own elaboration

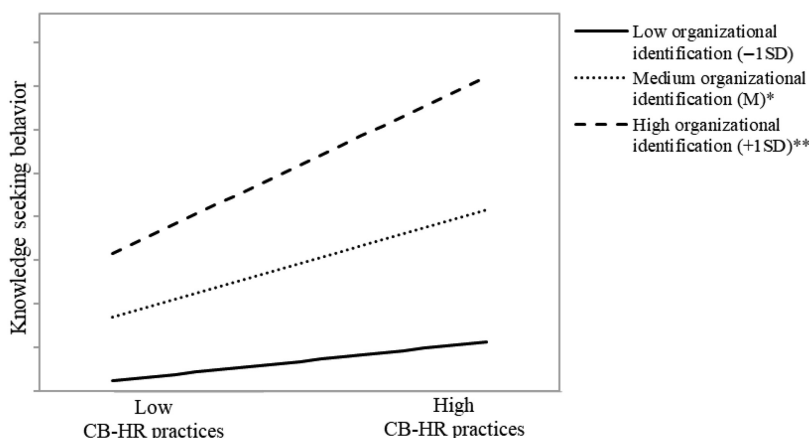


**Figure 2.** Moderation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between commitment-based HR practices and overall job satisfaction

**Note(s):** \**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01; \*\*\**p* < 0.001

**Source(s):** Own elaboration

influences individuals' positive work attitudes and proactive behavior. The results supported the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, I found that employees' perception of CB-HR practices related positively to employees' job satisfaction and proactive knowledge-seeking



**Note(s):** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Source(s):** Own elaboration

**Figure 3.**  
Moderation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between commitment-based HR practices and knowledge seeking behavior

behavior. Furthermore, this study found that the strength of those relationships depends on the extent of the employee's identification with the organization. In the case of job satisfaction, the organizational identification of employees reduces the role of CH-HR practices, while in the case of proactive knowledge-seeking, it complements it.

### *Theoretical implications*

This work makes several theoretical contributions. Firstly, the findings add to the research on the individual outcomes of employees' perceptions of the CB-HR system (cf., Wang *et al.*, 2020) by examining two types of effects – attitude and behavior. It found that a positive perception of CB-HR practices strongly affects employees' job satisfaction. The results corroborate the previous studies on the positive relationships between the employees' perception of diverse HR systems (high involvement, high commitment, developmental) and relational attitudes (engagement and affective commitment; Farndale *et al.*, 2011; Boon & Kalshoven, 2014) but also general job satisfaction (Latorre *et al.*, 2016). In summary, when employees have positive experiences with HR practices focused on building long-term relationships, it strongly influences their positive attitudes toward work. Regarding the behavioral outcomes, the results suggest that positive employee perception of CB-HR practices increases knowledge-seeking behavior. These results are similar to the studies on HR and proactive behavior relationships (general proactive behavior, feedback-seeking behavior; Conway & Monks, 2009; Maden, 2015; Marescaux & De Winne, 2023).

With the above-discussed results, the study also adds to research on the behavioral response in the social exchange relationship between organizations and employees, showing that the employees reciprocate the organizational benefits not only with attitudes, prosocial or extra-role behavior (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017) but also proactive behavior (Singh & Rangnekar, 2020). The employees' willingness to reciprocate the organization motivates them to take risks and source needed knowledge from their peers. Moreover, this study supports the argument that employees will positively reciprocate the benefits received from organizations based on how they perceive HR practices, not how managers implement them.

The subsequent contribution pertains to the employee-related factors that influence the HRM practices' effectiveness. Adding to previous studies, which found that employees' abilities (Boon & Kalshoven, 2014) or their attitudes (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013) determine the impact of HR practices on employee behavior or attitudes, the present research shows that the employees' organizational identification is also a significant boundary condition of HR effectiveness. With that, this study extends the results of Mostafa *et al.* (2019). Specifically, depending on how intrinsically motivated employees are to act in the organization's best interest, HR practices are more effective for proactive behavior but less effective for job satisfaction.

The final area of contribution refers to the integrated effect of SET and SIT on employee outcomes. This study supports Tavares *et al.* (2016) argument that individuals, based on their level of identification with the organization, choose how to respond to the benefits they perceive from HR practices. I found that the influence of organization identification on the relationship between HR practices and employee outcomes varies depending on the type of outcome. Thus, we may conclude that employees' organizational identification regulates the content of social exchange because it changes how individuals conceptualize their roles, expectations, needs, and expected behaviors (Tavares *et al.*, 2016).

Similarly to Mostafa *et al.* (2019) and Tavares *et al.* (2016), I found a substitutional effect of social identification and social exchange on employees' attitudes. Specifically, results showed that the strongly identified employees would respond with a minor increase in their job satisfaction on the higher level of CB-HR practices. It means that the combined effect of the feeling of attachment to the organization and the sense of being supported by the organization through HR practices on positive work attitudes is not additive. Specifically, strong organizational identification substitutes the low level of implementation of CB-HR practices, so the job satisfaction of strongly identified employees is mainly based on fulfilling their need for affection and belonging to the organization. However, the high positive perception of CB-HR practices will strongly affect the job satisfaction of employees who weakly identify with the organization. Future studies could analyze whether the substitutional influence of identification and social exchange refers to other positive (e.g. work engagement) or negative (e.g. burnout, perceived stress) work attitudes.

In the case of employees' behavior as an outcome of the integration of SET and SIT, the present results align with the findings of Abbasi, Shabbir, Abbas, and Tahir (2021), Tavares *et al.* (2016), and Hekman, Steensma, Bingley, and Hereford (2009). Those studies, together with the present one, suggest that for proactive knowledge-seeking behavior (and also knowledge-sharing, extra-role behavior, or organizational policy adherence), SET and SIT play complementary roles. This suggests that the motivation driven by social exchange and the desire to reciprocate the organization's support is enhanced by the sense of belonging and the motivation for organizational well-being that comes from identification (Blader *et al.*, 2017). As a conditional factor, organizational identification sets off the reciprocation motivation to behave proactively at work. Specifically, the present study showed that individuals who strongly identify with the organization are willing to reciprocate with the organization with a greater frequency of inquiring about work-related knowledge from organizational experts to perform their tasks better and learn for the future. On the other hand, low identifiers are not willing to reciprocate with that proactive behavior.

#### *Practical implications*

The HR managers are interested in positively influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors by implementing policies and practices, fostering relationships, and establishing a unique organizational identity. The study's findings indicate that increasing managerial interventions may not always lead to improved attitudes among all employees. Therefore,

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managers should purposefully determine the actions used in forming and maintaining employee-organization psychological relationships depending on the expected behavioral or attitudinal effects.

First, the study's results suggest that managers can influence employees' job satisfaction by facilitating their organizational identification and employing CB-HR practices, but not simultaneously. Therefore, managers, having the job satisfaction attitude as the primary expected effect, should select the most cost-effective activities from between implementing HR practices that support high commitment and encourage social exchange or actions like, for example, developing the prestige of an organization that supports organizational identification of employees (Weisman, Wu, Yoshikawa, & Lee, 2023). Previous studies add that similar decisions could be made regarding employees' organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, or intention to quit the organization (Mostafa *et al.*, 2019). However, in the case of those MNC subsidiaries that do not have autonomy in designing HR practices and policies, this study suggests that the job satisfaction of employees can be improved by implementing local interventions that increase employees' identification with the subsidiary (e.g. supporting inspirational leadership).

When managers aim to increase employees' proactiveness (knowledge-seeking or extra-role behaviors; Tavares *et al.* (2016), the most effective would be to simultaneously develop commitment-based employee-organization relationships through HR practices and strengthening employees' organizational identification through taking care of organizational values, its distinctiveness and leadership.

Finally, managers should monitor how employees receive the HR practices they implement, because it significantly determines their effectiveness on the employee level. In the context of subsidiaries, when HR practices are standardized across MNCs, local managers play a crucial role in ensuring these practices are understood and implemented effectively within the local context. They achieve this through clear communication of HR practices to staff, providing training, and regularly gathering feedback from employees on HR activities. Thus, the effectiveness of HR practices not only depends on the practice specificity but even more on how employees find them and understand their role.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Although the presented results are consistent with the theory, the study had several limitations. The first one was the study's cross-sectional design, which might cause CMB (as discussed in previous sections). Future studies could address this problem. Moreover, it could be valuable for the robustness of the results, especially regarding proactive behavior, to collect data from two sources – e.g. an employee and the immediate supervisor or co-workers. Other concerns deriving from cross-sectional data are the possible alternative links between variables. For example, HR practices could affect organizational identification over time, and job satisfaction could affect identification. It would be valuable to design a longitudinal study with repeated measures.

Another limitation was collecting data from a limited number of subsidiaries (four organizations) in Central Europe's single national cultural context (CE). Scholars performed previous studies on SET and SIT interactions in West European countries (WE) (Germany, Greece, Sweden, and Portugal). Although this study showed some consistency in results with previous ones, there were also some differences. Therefore, it would be helpful to analyze the role of national cultural values in the European context. It seems valuable from a practical perspective because companies from WE decide to launch their subsidiaries in CE. Moreover, a study on a bigger number of subsidiaries might shed some light on the possible moderation effect of the extent of localization or standardization of HR practices in MNCs.



Finally, concerning the type of organizations under study, the subsidiaries of MNEs, I analyzed the organizational identification only from the local subsidiary perspective. However, individuals might identify with different social entities. Therefore, taking cognizance of team or group identification or higher-order identification with the MNE could add to the results.

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