

Conceptual Framework for Linking HRM Practices with Employee Wellbeing in Telecom Environments

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Abstract: The telecommunications sector is undergoing rapid technological transformation, accompanied by intense performance demands, role ambiguity, and elevated stress levels among employees. These pressures have escalated challenges related to employee wellbeing, making it imperative for telecom organizations to adopt people-centric Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies. Despite the established role of HRM in enhancing organizational performance, its specific impact on employee wellbeing in high-pressure sectors like telecom has received limited theoretical attention. This study addresses that gap by proposing a conceptual framework linking key HRM practices—training and development, performance appraisal, rewards and recognition, employee participation, and work-life balance—with employee wellbeing outcomes, including job satisfaction, psychological health, and organizational commitment. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, the Job Demands–Resources Model, and Self-Determination Theory, the framework posits that HRM practices influence employee wellbeing indirectly through mediators such as job satisfaction and employee engagement, and are further moderated by contextual factors like organizational culture and leadership style. This conceptual model aims to steer future empirical research and offers actionable insights for HR professionals seeking to retain talent, reduce burnout, and foster sustainable workforce engagement in telecom environments.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Employee Wellbeing, Telecom Sector, Job Satisfaction, JD-R Model, Social Exchange Theory, Self-Determination Theory.

Introduction - Human Resource Management (HRM) has evolved into a strategic pillar in modern organizations, shaping not only performance outcomes but also the overall wellbeing of employees. As businesses increasingly operate in fast-paced, technology-driven environments, the importance of HRM practices that support workforce resilience, engagement, and satisfaction has gained unprecedented relevance. In high-pressure industries, HRM must go beyond administrative functions and become a proactive force in fostering a sustainable and healthy work culture.

Telecommunications sector is an essential catalyst for digital transformation, economic advancement, and global connectivity. Mobile-cellular subscription users covered more than 8.6 billion in 2023 globally according to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), with the sector contributing significantly to GDP and employment in emerging economies.(ITU, 2023) In India alone, the telecom industry is expected to generate over 2.5 million direct and indirect jobs by 2025.(IBEF, 2023) Despite its economic importance and growth potential, the sector faces critical challenges related to employee wellbeing and human capital management.

Those working in Telecom companies are faced with high pressure working environments which includes rapid technology shifts, aggressive deadlines, long work hours and the requirement to ensure that services are up & running every minute of every day. These job demands are known to be associated with high levels of stress, reduced job satisfaction and high withdrawal rates. According specific empirical studies, the telecom sector continues to suffer high.(Deloitte, 2022) Poor work life balance, unappreciated, and very limited career growth opportunities are the three main reasons why employees in this sector are unhappy with their job, leading to high attrition.

Given such circumstances, Human Resource Management The practice of HRM trains the employees to take a chance to oversee' system that has become very strategic not only for getting the performance right but to provide ways for employees to enrich their lives. HRM practices like continuous training and development, performance appraisal, rewards and recognition, employees participation, and work-life balance initiative are well-known for setting up a climate of support in the organization.(Jawaad et al., 2019) Evidence suggests that these practices can act as buffers against stress and

burnout, ultimately contributing to better mental health, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.(Kalyanamitra et al., 2020; Nelson & Fitriana, 2024)

While the role of HRM in enhancing performance has been widely studied, its relationship with employee wellbeing—particularly in high-demand sectors like telecommunications—has received limited theoretical attention. There is acknowledgement of a need for more conceptual work to tie strategic HRM practices to wellbeing outcomes with models that are properly grounded in psychology and organisational behaviour. This paper seeks to redress this by offering a model of the way key HRM practices interact with certain objectives underpinning staff wellbeing in telecoms arena.

Aimed at steering future empirical studies and providing practical guidance for HR professionals who aim in retaining talent, lowering burnout and establishing a healthier more engaged workforce in a telecommunication organization. Given disturbing trends in the workforce, there is a strong argument for concentrating on employee well-being in telecommunications. A 2023 Aon report warned that more than 80% of Asia-Pacific telecom employees were experiencing moderate to high stress levels. This was driven by increased customer expectations, continuous technological upgrade.(Aon, 2023) Gallup's 2022 State of the Global Workplace Report found that only 21% of employees worldwide are engaged at work, and disengagement costs the global economy an estimated \$7.8 trillion annually.(Gallup, 2022) These issues are magnified in telecom companies where high attrition rates and low job satisfaction have become structural problems.

The telecom firms are investing big in digital aids and the automation of services but largely missing out on the touch of humanness that would sustain innovativeness as well as client satisfaction. And even when companies adopt specific HR measures like Work From Home or Wellness programs, there is hardly a strategic approach towards employee well-being that will draw positive results and instead, it leads to fragmented as well as ineffective outcomes. This lacuna proffers a case for a unified model connecting HRM practices such as training, recognition and participative decision making with outcomes like Psychological well-being, Organizational commitment and finally satisfaction of the employees.

Recent meta-analyses have shown that HRM systems designed with wellbeing in mind significantly improve employee engagement and reduce turnover intentions.(van de Voorde et al., 2012) These studies often adopt a generic cross-sectoral lens. There is limited sector-specific insight into how HRM can be optimized for wellbeing in telecom environments—where job demands are unique, and stressors are often systemic.

This paper aims to develop a conceptual framework linking HRM practices to employee wellbeing in the telecommunications sector. Drawing on Social Exchange

Theory, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, and Self-Determination Theory, the framework identifies key HRM drivers, mediators (e.g., job satisfaction, engagement), and contextual moderators (e.g., organizational culture, leadership style) that shape wellbeing outcomes. The model is intended to guide future empirical research and inform HR professionals seeking to foster a healthier, more engaged, and resilient workforce in telecom organizations.

Literature Review

Employee wellbeing in this study is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing:

1. Psychological wellbeing (mental health, emotional resilience)
2. Job satisfaction (perception of role fulfillment and fairness)
3. Work-life balance (ability to manage personal and professional demands)
4. Organizational commitment (attachment and loyalty to the organization)

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in shaping workforce performance and wellbeing, especially in high-pressure environments like the telecommunications sector. In Laos, Southiseng and Walsh (2025) found that HRM was underutilized and lacked strategic direction. Their study, involving responses from 396 employees and 73 managers, showed that proper implementation of HRM practices significantly improved employee satisfaction, perceptual development, and performance. However, telecom companies in Laos struggled with weak compensation systems, limited training, and inadequate managerial support—reflecting a broader regional issue of underdeveloped HR structures in emerging economies.(Southiseng & Walsh, 2017)

Kooij et al. (2013) provided a life-span perspective on the influence of HRM practices on employee wellbeing and performance across different age groups. The authors categorized HR practices into development, maintenance, and job enrichment bundles. They concluded that development practices (e.g., training) were more effective for younger workers, while maintenance practices (e.g., performance appraisal) and job enrichment were more critical for older employees. This study highlighted the importance of age-sensitive HRM strategies and how such tailoring can strengthen the link between HRM and employee wellbeing outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and fairness perceptions.(Kooij et al., 2013) Bhoir and Sinha (2024), through a systematic literature review of 16 peer-reviewed articles using the PRISMA 2020 framework, identified that despite growing attention, HRM practices dedicated exclusively to employee wellbeing (EWBHRPs) are under-researched. The authors proposed a consolidated conceptual framework combining various HRM interventions that directly target wellbeing. They emphasized training, flexible work schedules, emotional

wellness programs, and participatory leadership as key drivers of wellbeing. Their findings support the need for an integrated approach to designing HRM systems that prioritize employee mental health and engagement post-COVID-19.(Bhoir & Sinha, 2024)

Yadav et al. (2022) conducted a broad systematic review focusing on mediating and moderating variables in employee relations (ER) and sustainable organizations. The study found that organizational trust, justice, perceived job satisfaction, leadership behavior, and psychological empowerment significantly influence the HRM–wellbeing linkage. These variables either mediate or moderate employee perceptions of HR effectiveness. Importantly, their framework supports the inclusion of contextual elements—such as organizational culture and leadership style—as critical boundary conditions in HRM-wellbeing models, particularly in dynamic and stress-prone sectors like telecom.(Yadav et al., 2022)

Judijanto, Soesanto, and Pahrijal (2025) used bibliometric analysis to trace evolving research trends in HRM and employee wellbeing. Their review highlighted recurring themes such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, burnout, and digital stress. Emerging concerns included the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in HRM, mental health awareness, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The authors noted that the incorporation of ethical technology use and personalized wellbeing strategies will be essential for future HRM frameworks, especially in technology-heavy sectors such as telecommunications.(Judijanto et al., 2025)

While literature confirms the positive influence of HRM on employee wellbeing, sector-specific models are lacking. The studies above consistently recommend clearer theoretical integration and a tailored approach to different workforce demographics. Moreover, gaps remain in linking specific HR practices—like performance appraisal, rewards, and employee participation—to wellbeing outcomes through robust mediators like engagement and satisfaction. The current conceptual framework addresses these gaps by embedding psychological theories such as Social Exchange Theory, JD-R Model, and Self-Determination Theory to explain the underlying mechanisms in the telecom context.

Theoretical Framework : Understanding the mechanisms through which Human Resource Management (HRM) practices influence employee wellbeing requires grounding in robust organizational and psychological theories. This study draws upon three complementary frameworks—Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT)—to explain how HRM interventions affect employee attitudes, motivation, and psychological outcomes within the high-pressure context of the telecommunications sector.

Social Exchange Theory (SET): Social Exchange Theory, originally developed by Blau (1964), posits that human relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges that aim to

maximize benefits and minimize costs. Within organizational settings, this translates into the notion that employees form psychological contracts with their employers—exchanging their effort, loyalty, and performance for tangible and intangible rewards such as fair treatment, recognition, and developmental opportunities.(Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) In the context of telecom work environments—marked by high workload, customer pressure, and role ambiguity—the presence of supportive HRM practices (e.g., transparent communication, fair performance appraisal, and employee involvement) signals that the organization values its workforce. This perceived organizational support fosters a sense of obligation and trust, encouraging employees to reciprocate through increased engagement, job satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing.(Eisenberger et al., 1986)

Application: When a telecom field technician receives consistent feedback, recognition, and opportunities for upskilling, they are more likely to feel committed and emotionally supported, buffering the impact of high job demands.

II. Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model: Developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) and further refined by Bakker & Demerouti (2007), the JD-R Model categorizes job characteristics into two dimensions:

Job Demands: aspects of work that require sustained effort and are associated with psychological costs (e.g., long hours, emotional labour, high performance targets).

Job Resources: aspects that help achieve work goals, reduce demands, or promote personal growth (e.g., supportive leadership, training, autonomy).

The model posits two pathways:

Health Impairment Process: Excessive demands without adequate resources ! burnout.

Motivational Process: Adequate resources ! engagement and wellbeing.

In telecom environments, employees often operate under intense pressure and technological disruption. Strategic HRM practices such as flexible scheduling, recognition systems, and professional development act as organizational resources that buffer job stress and foster resilience.(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001)

Application: A telecom company that implements wellness programs, recognition platforms, and training modules provides employees with the tools to manage demands effectively leading to enhanced psychological wellbeing.

III. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000), posits that individuals have three fundamental psychological needs:

- 1. Autonomy** – the need to feel in control of one's work.
- 2. Competence** – the need to feel capable and effective.
- 3. Relatedness** – the need to feel connected to others.

SDT argues that fulfilment of these needs' leads to intrinsic motivation, psychological growth, and wellbeing. HRM

practices are instrumental in satisfying or frustrating these needs.

1. Autonomy is supported through participative decision-making and flexible work arrangements.
2. Competence is enhanced via continuous training and constructive feedback.
3. Relatedness is fostered through inclusive leadership, team-building, and open communication.

In telecom roles, where employees often face rigid performance metrics and customer-facing pressure, autonomy and recognition are often limited. By embedding SDT principles into HR strategies, organizations can foster a more engaging and psychologically supportive environment.

Application: When a call centre agent is allowed to personalize client interactions (autonomy), receives skill-building opportunities (competence), and participates in team activities (relatedness), they are more likely to report high levels of wellbeing and organizational commitment.

IV. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Maslow (1943) proposed that human motivation follows a hierarchy: physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. HRM practices contribute to satisfying these needs:

1. Compensation and job security '! Physiological and safety
2. Team cohesion and leadership support '! Belongingness
3. Recognition and promotion '! Esteem
4. Learning opportunities '! Self-actualization

Relevance: In the telecom sector, meeting even lower-level needs (job security, work-life balance) can substantially reduce attrition and dissatisfaction.

V. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Herzberg (1959) distinguished between hygiene factors (e.g., salary, working conditions) that prevent dissatisfaction and motivators (e.g., achievement, growth) that drive satisfaction.

1. Hygiene Factors: Fair compensation, clear policies, and safe environments

2. Motivators: Recognition, challenging work, opportunities for advancement.

Application: Telecom HRM systems that only address hygiene (e.g., salary) but ignore motivators (e.g., growth, recognition) may fail to achieve sustained employee wellbeing.

Table 1

(see in last page)

Conceptual Framework & Hypothesis Development:

This study proposes a conceptual model that links strategic HRM practices to employee wellbeing outcomes in the telecom sector. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the framework explores both direct and indirect effects through mediating variables (job

satisfaction and engagement), while accounting for contextual moderators (organizational culture and leadership style).

HRM Practices and Employee Wellbeing: HRM practices such as training and development, performance appraisal, rewards and recognition, employee participation, and work-life balance initiatives are strategic tools that can positively shape employees' perceptions of support, fairness, and growth opportunities. These perceptions in turn influence mental health, emotional resilience, and job satisfaction—central aspects of employee wellbeing.(Jawaad et al., 2019; Kalyanamitra et al., 2020)

H₁: HRM practices are positively associated with employee wellbeing.

Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction, defined as the emotional response to one's role and work environment, is shaped by HRM practices. When employees perceive training, appraisal, and participation as fair and meaningful, their satisfaction increases, contributing to better mental health, motivation, and lower turnover intentions.(Hauret et al., 2022; Memon et al., 2020)

H₂: HRM practices are positively associated with job satisfaction.

H₃: Job satisfaction is positively associated with employee wellbeing.

H₄: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between HRM practices and employee wellbeing.

Mediating Role of Employee Engagement: Employee engagement refers to an individual's emotional and cognitive involvement in their work. HRM practices that provide purpose, feedback, and development opportunities foster engagement. Engaged employees are more resilient and psychologically well-equipped to handle stress.(Memon et al., 2020; Songkhla et al., 2020)

H₅: HRM practices are positively associated with employee engagement.

H₆: Employee engagement is positively associated with employee wellbeing.

H₇: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between HRM practices and employee wellbeing.

Moderating Role of Organizational Culture and Leadership Style

Organizational culture and leadership style moderate the effectiveness of HRM practices. Supportive cultures amplify the benefits of training and recognition. Similarly, participative or transformational leadership enhances employees' trust in HR processes, thereby intensifying the impact of HRM practices on satisfaction and wellbeing.(Nelson & Fitriana, 2024; Prentice, 2022)

H₈: Organizational culture moderates the relationship between HRM practices and job satisfaction.

H₉: Leadership style moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement.



Methodology: This study adopts a conceptual research design aimed at developing a theoretical framework that links Human Resource Management (HRM) practices with employee wellbeing, particularly within the high-demand context of the telecommunications sector. Rather than collecting primary data, the study synthesizes insights from existing literature, meta-analyses, and sector-specific reports to develop hypotheses and illustrate testable relationships.

Research Design

The research design is deductive and theory-driven, guided by well-established models from organizational psychology and human resource literature. The study constructs a theoretical model using:

- 1) Social Exchange Theory (SET)
- 2) Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model
- 3) Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

These theories collectively inform the causal logic linking HRM practices to employee wellbeing, mediated by job satisfaction and employee engagement, and moderated by organizational culture and leadership style.

Table 2 (see in last page)

Hypothesis Development Strategy: The hypotheses were developed through:

1. Systematic review of cross-sectoral and sector-specific studies on HRM and wellbeing.
2. Theory integration, aligning constructs with mediating and moderating variables.
3. Contextual framing, with a focus on telecom-specific pressures and workforce needs.

Proposed Analytical Approach (Future Empirical Testing)

To test the proposed model in future studies, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is recommended due to:

1. Suitability for complex, multivariate models.
2. Ability to handle small to medium sample sizes.
3. Flexibility in exploring mediating and moderating effects.

Future research may involve surveying telecom employees using validated instruments such as:

1. UWES for engagement

2. Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)
3. HRM perception scales (Jawaad et al., 2019)
4. Wellbeing indices (e.g., WHO-5 or Gallup)

Discussion: This study proposed a conceptual framework highlighting how Human Resource Management (HRM) practices influence employee wellbeing through the mediating roles of job satisfaction and employee engagement. The inclusion of moderators such as organizational culture and leadership style adds nuance to this relationship. The framework is well-supported by recent literature, offering both theoretical clarity and practical relevance.

HRM Practices and Job Satisfaction: Recent research continues to affirm that HRM practices significantly influence job satisfaction. A case study from a telecom firm in Saudi Arabia found that training and development were the most influential HRM practices impacting job satisfaction, with performance appraisal and compensation also playing significant roles.(Alfaqih, 2011) Similarly, a study by Hauret et al. (2020) emphasized that the perception of HRM practices by employees is more influential than the practices themselves—highlighting the need for effective communication and transparency in HR policy implementation. (Hauret et al., 2022)

Mediating Role of Engagement and Satisfaction: Memon et al. (2020) found that employee engagement significantly mediates the relationship between satisfaction with HRM practices—such as training and performance appraisal—and turnover intention in the oil and gas sector. The study underlines that HR practices alone do not directly influence retention or wellbeing unless they also improve engagement.(Memon et al., 2020)

Songkhla et al. (2020) expanded this idea by demonstrating that organizational engagement mediates the relationship between HRM factors such as procedural justice and career development and employee job satisfaction in Thailand's pharmaceutical industry.(Songkhla et al., 2020) These findings reinforce the dual mediation mechanism suggested in this study.

HRM and Wellbeing in Telecom Context: Naz and Khaliq (2011) conducted a focused study on the telecom sector in Pakistan, finding that high-involvement HRM practices—like decision-making inclusion, training, and performance-based compensation—had a significant positive effect on both job satisfaction and perceived organizational support, both of which are foundational to employee wellbeing.(Naz & Khaliq, 2011)

Prentice (2022) emphasized that supportive leadership—an identified moderator in this study—is essential for fostering both job satisfaction and engagement, irrespective of which one precedes the other. This confirms the importance of context and culture in moderating HRM-outcome relationships.(Prentice, 2022)

Together, these studies support and extend the proposed conceptual framework. They validate the critical

mediating roles of job satisfaction and engagement, while also demonstrating that perceptions of fairness, leadership, and employee inclusion are equally vital in shaping HRM's impact on wellbeing.

This study uniquely contributes to the literature by synthesizing recent, sector-specific evidence from the telecom and service industries, where employee wellbeing is increasingly recognized as a strategic concern. By emphasizing the dual mediating roles of job satisfaction and employee engagement, the framework offers a more comprehensive understanding of how HRM practices influence employee outcomes. Furthermore, the inclusion of contextual moderators such as organizational culture and leadership style enhances the practical relevance of the model, especially in high-pressure and rapidly evolving sectors like telecommunications. This integrative approach provides both theoretical depth and practical utility for scholars and HR practitioners aiming to improve employee wellbeing through strategic HR interventions.

Conclusion: This conceptual study advances the discourse on Human Resource Management (HRM) by proposing a theoretically grounded framework that links strategic HR practices with employee wellbeing in the context of the high-demand telecommunications sector. The model integrates Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explain the psychological and organizational mechanisms through which HRM interventions—such as training, performance appraisal, rewards, and participative decision-making—enhance employee outcomes. It identifies job satisfaction and employee engagement as central mediators and acknowledges organizational culture and leadership style as key moderators that shape the effectiveness of HRM strategies.

By aligning HRM practices with employees' intrinsic psychological needs and contextual organizational dynamics, the framework offers a pathway to mitigate stress, reduce burnout, and foster a more engaged and resilient workforce. In doing so, it responds to a pressing need for sector-specific, empirically testable models that go beyond performance-centric metrics and prioritize employee wellbeing as a strategic imperative.

The study contributes both academically and practically: academically, by synthesizing multiple theoretical perspectives into a unified model tailored to the telecom industry; and practically, by offering HR professionals a blueprint to design people-centered policies that improve both individual wellbeing and organizational outcomes. Furthermore, it encourages a shift from transactional HR practices to transformational approaches that emphasize care, development, and mutual commitment.

Future research should empirically test this framework using structural equation modeling and multi-level data from telecom organizations to validate the proposed relationships and refine the model. Practitioners are urged to view

employee wellbeing not as a peripheral HR function but as a core strategic driver of sustainable organizational success in the evolving digital economy.

Practical Implications: HR leaders and practitioners in the telecom sector can apply this framework by:

1. Designing training programs that enhance not just technical skills but also resilience and adaptability.
2. Embedding regular, fair performance appraisals to foster trust and clarity.
3. Introducing flexible work policies and wellness programs that directly target burnout and work-life imbalance.
4. Cultivating leadership development initiatives that promote inclusive, supportive, and participative leadership.

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Table 1 : Comparative Alignment of Theories with HRM Practices

HRM Practice	SET	JD-R	SDT	Maslow	Herzberg
Training & Development	Builds reciprocity (support)	Increases job resources	Builds competence	Esteem, Self-actualization	Motivator
Performance Appraisal	Fairness and trust	Clarifies expectations	Builds competence and autonomy	Esteem	Motivator
Rewards & Recognition	Reciprocity for effort	Motivation through reward	Fulfils esteem needs	Esteem	Motivator
Work-Life Balance Initiatives	Organizational care	Reduces job demands	Supports autonomy	Safety, Belonging	Hygiene Factor
Employee Participation	Enhances involvement	Promotes autonomy as resource	Fosters autonomy and relatedness	Belongingness, Esteem	Motivator
Supportive Leadership	Trust and loyalty	Enhances resources	Fulfils relatedness	Belongingness	Hygiene & Motivator

Table 2 : Variable Specification

Construct	Definition	Source
HRM Practices	Structured interventions such as training, rewards, and appraisal	Jawaad et al. (2019)
Job Satisfaction	Emotional response to job duties and conditions	Hauret et al. (2022)
Employee Engagement	Emotional and cognitive involvement in work	Memon et al. (2020)
Employee Wellbeing	A composite of mental health, work-life balance, and job-related fulfillment	Ryan & Deci (2001); Gallup (2022)
Organizational Culture	Shared norms and values influencing perceptions of HRM	Prentice (2022)
Leadership Style	The behavioral approach of leaders toward guiding and supporting subordinates	Nelson & Fitriana (2024)
