Perceived organizational support as the mediator of the relationships between high-performance work practices and counter-productive work behavior: Evidence from airline industry

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ABSTRACT

In light of Signaling theory, this study investigates the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) in the relationship between high-performance work practices (HPWPs) and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Judgmental sample of flight attendants in Iran was used to asses this relationship. The results of multiple regression analysis indicate that empowerment, reward and promotion as indicators of HPWPs are negatively related to CWB. Further, the results support the mediating role of POS in this relationship. Specifically, results indicate that POS acts as the partial mediator in the relationships between empowerment, reward and CWB. Moreover, results support full mediating role of POS in the relationships between promotion and CWB. This study advances our understanding of organizational level antecedents of CWB and mediating role of POS as the social mechanism through which HPWPs predict employees' behavioral outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) as a discretionary behavior which violates the organizational norms has attracted considerable research attention during the recent years (e.g., Bowling and Burns, 2015; Spector and Zhou, 2014; Fida et al., 2014).CWB refers to "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both" (Robinson and Bennett, 1995. P.556), which usually include behaviors such as theft, sabotaging organization's properties, spreading rumors, absenteeism, and sexual harassment.

Review of the extant literature provides insight into different frameworks or categorization of CWB which clearly distinguish between acts directed at individuals and at organization (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Bennett and Robinson, 2000).However, such categorization is beyond the scope of this study. According to the definition of CWB, it is obvious that such behavior will cost extreme amount of financial and non-financial problems to the organization and its members. Regarding the negative impacts of the phenomenon, reports revealed that CWB costs organizations billions of dollars per annum (Bowling and Gruys, 2010). Particularly, CWB is reported to occur in the airline industry (Hsieh et al., 2004), due to flight attendants' specific working environment where dim lights, long night shifts, aggressive and destructive passengers, air pressure and other types of harmful physical elements make it difficult to work in the airplane (Neuman and Baron, 1998; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1996). Hsieh et al. (2004), strongly suggest that the antecedents of CWB in the airline and tourism industry deserve more attention in order to avoid losses associated with such behavior. In Iran, few studies focused on counterproductive work behaviors. Particularly, there is no evidence of practical statistics or surveys with respect to the loss incurred by such behavior.

Several studies attempted to reveal the causes of CWB in the organization such as Stressors, Negative emotions and Moral disengagement (Fida et al., 2014); Personality trait (Oh et al., 2014); Fairness, emotion and emotion regulation (Matta et al., 2014); Narcissism (Grijalva and Newman, 2015) and Status judgment and identification (Al-Atwi and Bakir, 2014). In a More relevant approach, Samnani and Power (2014) found a negative association between strong HRM practices and CWB directed to individuals.

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Similar results have been found in the literature regarding negative relationship between HR practices and interpersonal deviance behavior (Arthur, 2011; Shamsudin et al., 2011). However, studies that go beyond the individual factors related to CWB is limited (Barling et al., 2009). Piening et al. (2014) assert that the role of human resource management in explaining CWB is neglected in the relative literature. According to Niehoff and Paul (2000), factors at the systemic or organizational level are associated with CWB. Factors such as internal control, security devices, compensation system, incentives, job redesign and process reengineering are among the factor which predicts to what degree employees engage in theft (Niehoff and Paul, 2000). Hence, presence of high-performance work practices (HPWPs) is assumed to be negatively related to CWB. High performance work practices are a 'bundle' of human resource practices that focus on enhancing employee knowledge, skills and ability to perform better in the organization and lowers their turnover intentions (Huselid, 1995).Rewards, team work, recruitment and selection, empowerment and training program as indicators of HPWPs are among best practices which are applied by the leading airlines (Solnet et al., 2010; Writz, Heracleous and Pangarkar, 2008). Current literature reported positive outcomes due to adaptation of HPWPs in the organization, such as enhanced career satisfaction and service recovery performance (Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2015); increased employee subjective well-being and decreased job burnout (Fan et al., 2014); higher organizational citizenship behavior (Sarikwal and Gupta, 2013) and individual creativity (Chang et al., 2014). According to Karatepe and Vatankhah (2014), presence of number of HPWPs such as training and re-training programs aimed at better use of empowerment, rewarding and recognizing high performing flight attendants and providing them with the promotional opportunities in the organization as functions of HPWPs leads to increased perception of organizational support. Based on signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 1974), it is assumed that, presence of HPWPs send this signal to flight attendants that their contributions to the organization is recognized, valued and rewarded, and the organization is concerned about their well-being which in turn would lead to positive response from flight attendants in terms of higher perceived organizational support (POS), better service quality, lower turnover intentions and lower CWB.

As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the mediating role of perceived organizational support in the relation between HPWPs manifested as empowerment, reward and promotion and counter-productive work behavior. In line with previous studies, empowerment, reward and promotion are significant indicators of HPWPs which are well applicable for the fight attending position (e.g., Kim and Back, 2012; Solnet et al., 2010; Wirtz et al., 2008). Therefore, data gathered from flight attendants in Iran is used to test (a) the effects of empowerment, reward and promotion on POS; (b) the effect of POS on CWB and (c) the mediating role of POS in the relation between HPWPs and CWB. Present study contributes to the body of literature by conducting research among flight attendants in Iran, where it seems that the knowledge of CWB is still in its infancy. As suggested by LasisiOlukayod et al. (2014), developing and underdeveloped countries need more research attention in the CWB literature. Moreover, presence of HPWPs as the organizational level antecedent of CWB is a response for the call for more research, investigating causes of CWB beyond its personal or individual factors (Piening et al., 2014; Arthur, 2011; Shamsudin et al., 2011). Finally, POS acts as the mediating mechanism through which the effects of HPWPs indicated by empowerment, reward and promotion on CWB are investigated as a response to the call for more research attention concerning the mediating mechanism(s) through which HPWPs would affect several performance outcomes (Mostafa and Gould-Williams, 2014; Alfes et al., 2013). Managerial implications provided in the article, would also provide a useful guideline for the airline managers who are concerned about the well-being of their flight attendants and would like to benefit from the strategies by which enables them to reduce the negative impacts of CWB.

2. Signaling theory

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) argues that employees view organization's positive inputs as signals of support from the organization which leads to positive reaction back to the organization. According to Connelly et al. (2011), there has been an increasing interest in using signaling theory as a theoretical framework in the literature. However, this theory has been under researched in management literatures (Connelly et al., 2011). Based on signaling theory, employees' perceptions of HPWPs are positively related to their work-related attitudes (Kooij et al., 2009). That is, HPWPs are positively related to flight attendants' perception of organizational support, and functions as 'signals' of the organization's good intentions toward them. In this line of reasoning, the general assumption is that flight attendants will view HPWPs as a personalized commitment toward them, an investment in them, and as recognition of their contribution, which they will then reciprocate through correspondingly positive attitudes and behavior toward the organization (Hannah and Iverson, 2004; Shore and Wayne, 1993). On the basis of this realization, we propose that flight attendants would interpret the presence of HPWPs in terms of empowerment, reward and promotion as positive signals of support from the organization. Their positive evaluation of organizational cues and the feeling of POS would lead to reciprocate positively by avoiding to involve in dysfunctional or counterproductive work behavior such as absenteeism, theft, sabotage, drug use and sexual harassment at work.

According to above-mentioned realization, our study tests the conceptual model that investigates the mediating effect of POS in the relationship between HPWPs and CWB. Investigation of such relationship in light of Signaling theory is advised in the current literature (Mostafa and Gould-Williams, 2014; Alfes et al., 2013; Connelly et al., 2011). According to Fig. 1, HPWPs in terms of empowerment, reward and promotion is positively related to POS. Moreover, positive perception of organizational support leads to lower levels of CWB. That is, POS acts as the mediator of the effects of empowerment, reward and promotion on CWB.

3. Hypothesis

Studies in the service industry, convincingly suggest that the presence of HPWPs are positioned as essential organizational strategies for organizations seeking for enhanced performance outcome and quality service delivery process. Different service settings are benefitting from conducting various configurations of HPWPs. For example, in a study of hotel employees in China, Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007) found that High-performance human resource practices are associated with higher productivity and lower turnover. Moreover, according to Tang and Tang (2012), presence of high-performance HR practices in the hotel industry in

Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

Taiwan, would affect employees' service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating role of social climates of justice and service. According to, Chand and Katou (2007), performance of hotels in India are associated with the application of HRM practices in terms of recruitment and selection, manpower planning, job design, training and development, quality circle, and pay systems.

Apparently, the review of the relative literature reveals that the presence of HPWPs is also a common occurrence in the leading airline companies. Empowerment, reward and promotion are among HPWPs which are commonly used by such organizations. According to Writz et al. (2008) motivating employees through reward and recognition in addition to empowerment for quality control are among indicators of service excellence at Singapore airlines. This is also the case for the flight attendants at southwest airlines (Milliman et al., 1999). Flight attendants are working in a unique work environment where their accessibility to resources for quick responding to the customer's requirements is limited to their resources available at the airplane. This particular characteristic of flight attending position makes it essential for managers to provide flight attendants with empowerment to use their available facilities to respond quickly and appropriately on board the aircraft. Moreover, this specific environment, where flight attendant are acting emotionally by responding positively and friendly for even more than 10 h during one flight and not having enough time to recover from fatigue, makes it harsh for flight attendants to stay fresh for the rest of flights in their flight schedule, hence, being recognized and rewarded for positive contribution and high quality performance would mitigate the difficulties associated with the job. According to Rhoades et al. (2001), perceptions of organizational rewards and procedural justice are positively related to POS.

As another indicator of HPWPs, career opportunity and promotion are associated with lower perception of isolation among flight attendants (Chen and Kao, 2012).Growth opportunities, promotions and developmental experiences are the signals of organization's recognition about employee's contribution which leads to positive POS (Wayne et al., 1997). According to Karatepe and Vatankhah (2015), career opportunity is the most important indicator of HPWPs among flight attendants.This maybe the result of the fact that flight attending job develops its' own specific skills and experiences which are rarely transferable to other occupations (Liang and Hsieh, 2005), therefore, flight attendants tend to remain in their current organization and are highly concerned about the possible promotion opportunities within the organization. According to Liang and Hsieh (2005), confidence of career future is negatively related to burnout among flight attendants. In a study among Korean flight attendants, it is argued that consistent adaptation of HR policies in form of development, reward and training act as the sign of support from the organization (Hur et al. 2013). In a more general justification, Allen et al. (2003) argue HPWPs are positive precursors of POS in the organization.

Drawing upon signaling theory (Spence, 1973), presence of empowerment, reward and promotion as indicators of HPWPs are assumed to act as the sign of support provided by the organization. However, Allen et al. (2003) suggest that factors relating to the development of POS require more attention. Therefore, the following hypothesizes are developed:

Hypothesis 1: Empowerment is positively related to POS.
Hypothesis 2: Reward is positively related to POS.
Hypothesis 3: promotion is positively related to POS.

Organizational support takes place in two forms, namely the concern for the well-being of the employee and the concern for the socio-emotional status of the employees, where the former is provided with the benefits such as pay and reward and the latter is provided with benefits such as approval and esteem (Eisenberger et al., 1997). Employees with higher perception of organizational support are more likely to engage in constructive behavior focusing on fulfillment of organizational goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Particularly Sady et al. (2008) and Thau et al. (2007) found some association between POS and work place deviant behavior.

Rooted in signaling theory, the degree to which employees are perceiving support from the organization (POS), is related to their positive response back towards organization. In other words, in response to the support from the organization, employees tend to reciprocate positively by less turn over intentions and higher organizational involvement (Edwards and Peccei, 2015); enhanced organizational citizenship behavior (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012); improved organizational commitment and lower voluntary turnover (Allen and Shanock, 2013) and affective commitment (Caesens et al., 2015). However, employees with the perception of unsupportive organization seem to be more engaged in destructive behavior (Alias et al., 2013).

In line with this reasoning, Singh (2002) found that, employees who receive benefits such as reward are highly motivated to response positively and more likely to develop value throughout the organization. Particularly, empirical research asserts that presence of HR best practices is essential for the success of airlines (Kim and Back, 2012), because flight attendants are working in a particular work situation where they are confronted with variety of difficulties such as giving hand to old passengers, aggressive passengers, long flight times and fatigue. Moreover, a general belief exist that the salary for the flight attending position does not match the demands of the job. Therefore, presence of supportive organizational policies such as training and development seems to be more necessary for flight attendants in the airline industry than other industries (Rhoden et al., 2008). Flight attendants are working in a place where their performance is far from the controlling sight of management, which may result in higher frequency to display CWB. As cited in Neihoff and Paul's (2000) study, employees engage in theft when they are given the opportunity to do so (Hollinger and Clark, 1983), therefore, management of airline companies should benefit from strategies which enables them to reduce the occurrence of such behavior by boosting the perception of organizational support through adaptation of a range of HPWPs.

According to this realization, it is assumed that POS would reduce employees' propensity to engage in any forms of CWB. Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 4: POS is negatively related to CWB.

Against the negative impacts of CWB, organizations are still facing this phenomenon in terms of theft, bullying, destruction of property, poor attendance and work quality, and absenteeism. Case (2000) reported, CWBs such as theft and fraud are among usual occurrence in the organizations. However, such behavior are costly for organizations and the antecedents of CWBs should be noticed and investigated with the aim of preventing them (Yang et al., 2013). In a Meta-analysis of the antecedents of CWB, Dalal (2005) found that job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perception of organizational justice and conscientiousness were negatively related to CWB. From the contextual point of view, Lawrence and Robinson (2007) demonstrated imbalance of power in the organization leads to loss of autonomy which in turn causes resistance (a form of CWB) through the perception of injustice. As stated earlier, current literature focuses more on the individual causes of CWB and the organizational level practices such as HPWPs as strong predictor of such behavior are neglected. Consistent with signaling theory, presence of empowerment, reward and promotion as the significant indicators of HPWPs signals organization's attention and concern to the employees. Such practices would enable flight attendants with necessary facilities and motivation to

perform better in the organization which facilitates POS, leading to improved service delivery process, more satisfied customer and a better competitive position in the market place. POS, in turn, relates to lower propensity to engage in CWB. Therefore, it is plausible that POS acts as the mediator in the relationship between HPWPs as predictor variables and CWB as performance outcome. In line with this assumption, Neves and Eisenberger (2012) found that management communication affects in-role and extra-role performance only through POS. In addition, Cullen et al. (2014) reported the significant mediating effect of POS in the relationship between employees' adaptability and perceptions of change-related uncertainty and employees' satisfaction and performance. Specifically, supportive human resource practices in terms of participation in decision making, fairness of rewards and growth opportunities are proven to affect turnover intention through the mediating role of POS (Allen et al., 2003). Convincingly, Shoss et al. (2013) showed that lower level of POS would result in retribution against the organization. In other words, higher POS is associated with less destructive behavior such as withdrawal behavior in terms of voluntary turnover (Allen and Shanock, 2013); and CWB (Shantz et al., 2014). However, there is a paucity of research investigating the social mechanism through which HPWPs affects work outcomes (Messersmith et al., 2011). To fulfill this research gap, the following hypothesizes are developed.

Hypothesis 5: POS mediates the effect of empowerment on CWB.
Hypothesis 6: POS mediates the effect of reward on CWB.
Hypothesis 7: POS mediates the effect of promotion on CWB.

4. Methods

4.1. Sample and procedure

Data was gathered from a judgmental sample of flight attendant in public and private airlines in Iran. Flight attendants are frontline employees whose boundary spanning role includes activities such as serving passengers onboard the aircraft, as well as providing their safety and security all over the flight time. Research team members contacted the managers of these companies for permission using a letter, which contained the information regarding the purpose of the study. They accepted to participate in this empirical research and allowed researcher to have direct contact with their flight attendants during data collection. Flight attendants participated in the study in the central building of each airline company. Psychological separation of questionnaire was applied to reduce common method bias by separating predictor and criterion variable (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Accordingly, two different sets of anonymous self-report questionnaires were prepared and administered to the flight attendants by two members of the research team. The first set included measures of HPWPs dimensions (promotion, reward and empowerment), POS and measures concerning demographic variables. The second set included measures of CWB.

A total of 250 questionnaires were given to flight attendants. In all 198 questionnaires were returned. Thirteen questionnaires were omitted due to missing parts thus remaining 185 were used to analyze the data resulting 74% response rate. Non-response bias appeared limited because there was no significant difference between early respondents and late respondents on the means of research variables. All items in questionnaires were originally prepared in English and then translated into Persian using back translation method (Parameswaran and Yaprak, 1987). A pilot test of the Persian version of the questionnaires using 10flight attendants was conducted to assess their usability. The results from the pilot studies did not show any complexity. Therefore no changes were made in both questionnaires.

4.2. Measurement

Relevant sources were used to design construct measures from the current literature. Five items adapted from Hayes (1994) were used to measure empowerment. Promotion was measured using four items by Delery and Doty (1996). Five items developed by Boshoff and Allen (2000) were used to measure reward. Consistent with the work of Eisenberger et al. (2001), six items from Eisenberger et al. (1986) were utilized to measure POS. Responses to items of abovementioned variables were rated on five point scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". One negatively worded item each in Promotion and Perceived Organizational Support had been reverse scored. CWB was measured using a 19-item checklist developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). According to Sackett (2002), many forms of CWB would only occur in specific work environments and therefore, are not applicable to all work situations. Hence, concerning special characteristics of flight attending position, some measures were omitted from questionnaire such as "Falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses", "Come in late to work without permission", and "Dragged out work in order to get overtime". This approach is also in line with the work of Lee and Allen (2002) to omit some items from CWB scale. Participants indicated how often they engaged in certain behaviors in the workplace using a frequency scale ranging from 1 = "Never" to 5 = "Daily".

5. Result

As shown in Table 1, demographic breakdown of the sample indicated that the majority of respondents were female. That is, 60.5% of respondents were female and 39.5% were male. Less than 20% (19.5%) of respondents were aged between 18 and 27 years. Fifty four percent of respondents were between the ages of 28 and 37 and the rest were older than 37. Twenty five percent of respondents had secondary school education, while 28% had vocational school education. Forty one percent of respondents had

Table 1
Respondents' profile (*n* = 185).

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18–27	36	19.5
28–37	99	53.5
38–47	46	24.9
48–57	4	2.2
Total	185	100.0
Gender		
Male	73	39.5
Female	112	60.5
Total	185	100.0
Education		
Secondary school	47	25.5
Vocational school	52	28.1
Undergraduate degree	76	41.1
Graduate/doctor degree	10	5.4
Total	185	100.0
Organizational tenure		
1–5	42	22.7
6–10	54	29.2
11–15	67	36.2
16–20	13	7.0
21 and above	9	4.9
Total	185	100.0
Marital status		
Single or divorced	88	47.6
Married	97	52.4
Total	185	100.0

undergraduate degree and the rest had graduate/doctor degrees. The overwhelming majority of respondents (77%) had tenure of six years or more. The rest had been with their airline for five years or less. Forty eight percent of respondents were single or divorced, while 52% were married.

All items were subjected to a series of exploratory factor analysis. In exploratory factor analysis, principal components analysis with varimax rotation was utilized. The magnitudes of the loadings ranged from 0.42 to 0.86 (Table 2). All loadings were significant and there was no cross-loading which was equal to or greater than 0.30. However, six items from the CWB and one item from POS measures were dropped due to cross-loading. As a result, exploratory factor analysis produced five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. These factors collectively explained 55.6% of the variance. Considering internal consistency reliabilities; all coefficient alphas were deemed acceptable, since they were greater than the commonly accepted cut-off level of 0.70.

The abovementioned results demonstrated that there was evidence of convergent and discriminant validity and all measure were reliable. In order to check common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. That is, all measures were forced to load on one factor. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that one factor explained only 17.6% of the variance. According to these results, common method bias does not appear to be a potential threat to the magnitudes of relationships among variables.

6. Model assessment and test of hypotheses

Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach were used to test the full mediation relationship. Table 3 shows that Empowerment ($r = 0.222$), Reward ($r = 0.154$), and Promotion ($r = 0.180$) are significantly associated with POS. Moreover, the results in Table 3 indicate that Empowerment ($r = -0.534$), Reward ($r = -0.402$), and Promotion ($r = -0.334$) are significantly associated with CWB. The results also show that POS has a significant association with CWB ($r = -0.405$). As shown in Table 3, the abovementioned results consider as evidence to support Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, and 4. However the results in Table 4 prove that empowerment has a significant positive effect on perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.47$, $t = 4.41$); therefore H1 is supported. Table 4 also demonstrates that hypothesis 2 and 3 is supported, since reward ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 2.28$)

Table 2
Scale items, reliability and exploratory factor analysis results.

Scale items	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	% of variance	α
Counter Productive Work Behavior		5.47	17.6	0.79
1. Taken property from work without permission.	_[a]			
2. Spent too much time fantasizing or day dreaming instead of working.	0.53			
3. Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace.	0.61			
4. Littered your work environment.	0.63			
5. Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked.	_[a]			
6. Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person.	0.69			
7. Used an illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job.	_[a]			
8. Put little effort into your work.	0.75			
9. Neglected to follow your boss's instructions.	0.71			
10. Made fun of someone at work.	_[a]			
11. Said something hurtful to someone at work.	0.60			
12. Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work.	0.63			
13. Cursed someone at work.	_[a]			
14 Played a mean prank on someone at work.	_[a]			
15. Acted rudely toward someone at work.	0.68			
16. Publicly embarrassed someone at work.	0.72			
Perceived Organizational Support		2.28	7.38	0.77
1. This company values my contributions to its well-being.	0.70			
2. This company strongly considers my goals and values.	0.77			
3. This company is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	0.75			
4. This company shows very little concern for me[b].	0.64			
5. This company cares about my opinions.	_[a]			
6. This company takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	0.42			
Promotion		2.70	8.72	0.86
1. Employees have clear career paths within the organization.	0.79			
2. Employees have very little future within this organization.[b]	0.78			
3. Employees' career aspirations within this company are known by their chief supervisors.	0.72			
4. Employees who desire promotion have more than one potential position they could be promoted to.	0.59			
Empowerment		1.76	5.68	0.75
1. I am empowered to solve customer problems.	0.63			
2. I am encouraged to handle customer problems by myself.	0.66			
3. I do not have to get management's approval before I handle customer problems.	0.74			
4. I am allowed to do almost anything to solve customer problems.	0.59			
5. I have control over how I solve customer problems.	0.54			
Reward		5.04	16.25	0.90
1. If I improve the level of service I offer customers, I will be rewarded	0.77			
2. The rewards I receive are based on customer evaluations of service.	0.86			
3. I am rewarded for serving customers well.	0.78			
4. I am rewarded for dealing effectively with customer problems.	0.85			
5. I am rewarded for satisfying complaining customers	0.77			

Note: Each item is measured on a five-point scale. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.68; Bartletts' Test of Sphericity = 3112.7, df = 465, p < 0.001. The total variance explained by all factors is 55.6%.
α denotes alpha coefficient.
[a] Dropped as a result of exploratory factor analysis.
[b] Reversed-Scored Item.

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlations of study variables.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Empowerment	4.19	0.52	1				
2. Promotion	3.96	0.62	0.409[b]	1			
3. Reward	4.08	0.73	0.351[b]	0.141	1		
4. Perceived Organizational Support	2.40	1.47	0.222[b]	0.180[a]	0.154[a]	1	
5. Counter Productive Work Behavior	1.67	0.52	−0.534[b]	−0.334[b]	−0.402[b]	−0.405[b]	1

Note: Composite scores for each variable were computed by averaging respective item scores. SD denotes standard deviation.
[a] Correlations are significant at the .05 level.
[b] Correlations are significant at the .01 level.

and promotion ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 3.28$) positively impact perceived organizational support.

Checking for the full mediation, results in Table 4, indicate the effect size of empowerment on CWB decreases when POS is controlled but the effect size is still significant ($\beta = -0.35$, $t = -5.30$). Therefore POS ($\beta = -0.27$, $t = -4.66$) partially mediate abovementioned relationship. The result are significant base on the sobel test (3.20, $p < 0.001$), moreover an increment in R^2 was observed in Table 2 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$, $p < 0.001$).Therefore H5 is supported.

When POS was put in the model the effect size of reward on CWB reduced, however, remained significant ($\beta = -0.22$, $t = -3.64$). An increment of R^2 is observed in Table 2 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$, $p < .001$) and the result of Sobel test was significant (2.04, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, POS ($\beta = -0.27$, $t = -4.66$) partially mediated this relationship, which provides support for H6. Finally, results in Table 2 demonstrated that POS reduces the size of the effect of promotion on CWB. As a result, the effect of promotion on CWB becomes non-significant ($\beta = -0.11$, $t = -1.76$) when POS is controlled. Therefore POS ($\beta = -0.27$, $t = -4.66$) fully mediate the relationship between promotion and CWB, also an increment in R^2 was observed in Table 2 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, this mediation was significant based on Sobel test results (2.68, $p < 0.01$). Therefore hypothesis 7 was supported.

7. Discussion

Despite the raising research interest in the CWB in the literature, still there is a dearth of research pertaining to this phenomenon in the Asian countries (Xie and Johns, 2000; LasisiOlukayode et al., 2014). According to Smithikrai (2008), Eastern countries are facing CWB as an important aspect of job performance in their organizations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating role of POS in the HPWPs-CWB relation based on data gathered from flight attendants in Iran. Configuration of HPWPs as manifested by empowerment, reward and promotion is consistent with the current research among flight attendants (Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2015). Moreover, such practices are founded to be imperative for service quality in the leading airline companies such as Southwest airline and Singapore airline. The result of this study suggests that empowerment, reward and promotion-as the significant indicators of HPWPs in the organization-boost the perception of organizational support among flight attendants. Empowerment, reward and promotion signal organization's care about flight attendants' well-being and further career advancement opportunities. Based on signaling theory, result of this study further suggest that, flight attendants respond positively to the support they receive from the organization by showing behavioral outcome which is in line with organizational goal. In other words, POS leads to lower propensity to commit any act of CWB. Finally, the result of this study fill the research gap by showing POS as the full mediator of the effects of HPWPs on CBW as an employee level behavioral outcome (Mostafa and Gould-Williams, 2014; Alfes et al., 2013). Flight attendants' positive appraisal of work environment facilitated by empowerment, reward and promotion result in POS. In turn, they refuse to engage in CWB. We developed this conceptual model to provide a convincing mechanism for practitioners to understand the important role of HPWPs in reducing negative impacts of CWB. Particularly, result of the present study shed light on the significant mediating role of POS in abovementioned relationship.

Table 4
Regression results: Direct and mediating effects.

	Dependent variables and standardized regression weights					
	Perceived Organizational Support		Counter Productive Work Behavior			
	Step 1		Step 1		Step 2	
	β	t	β	t	β	t
(I) HPWP's Dimensions						
Empowerment	0.47	4.41***	−0.39	−5.65***	−0.35	−5.30***
Promotion	0.24	3.28***	−0.14	−2.13*	−0.11	−1.76
Reward	0.23	2.28*	−0.24	−3.84***	−0.22	−3.64***
(II) Perceived Organizational Support					−0.27	−4.66***
F	18.54***		33.09***		21.79***	
R^2 at each step	0.24		0.35		0.42	
ΔR^2					0.07	

Sobel test for:			
Empowerment	Perceived organizational support	Counter Productive Work Behavior	3.20***
Promotion	Perceived organizational support	Counter Productive Work Behavior	2.68**
Reward	Perceived organizational support	Counter Productive Work Behavior	2.04*

Note: The results do not show any problems of multicollinearity.
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***P < 0.001.

8. Implications

Findings of this study provide several guidelines for managers who wish to effectively curtail the occurrence of CWB. Hsieh et al. (2004) suggest that reducing CWB should be of priority for the management of the airline companies, due to the fact that flight attendants are working far from their controlling sight. Findings of this study strongly suggest that managers should apply empowerment, reward and promotion as indicators of HPWPs to enhance POS among flight attendants. Empowered flight attendants are able to deal with job demands and are more likely to enhance their service delivery quality through faster and more prompt response to passenger requirements. However, Karatepe and Vatankhah (2014), suggest that empowerment should be followed by necessary training dealing with how to use empowerment. High performing flight attendants should be recognized and rewarded based on a consistent performance appraisal. Rewarding high performing flight attendants send this message that the organization is concerned about the quality of a job done and employees who are contributing to the success of organizational goals are not neglected. As stated earlier, it seems that career opportunity and promotion plays a critical role in the flight attending position (Karatepe and Vatankhah, 2014), therefore, management of airline companies should provide promotional opportunities for flight attendant to motivate their high performing employees and retain their talented and experienced human capital. Overall, presences of HPWPs in the work environment sends signals of support from organization leading to lower level of CWB. From the stand point of management, organizations centering on reduction of the frequency of CWB, should provide a working environment which foster POS by application of HPWPs. Findings of this study suggest that POS would reduce the magnitude of CWB, which raise managerial concern to find ways through which POS is increased. For example, through less formal pattern of relationship, management and representatives of flight attendant community could come together and negotiate the current concern of their employees and find ways to cope with those concerns. Such informal gathering sessions would enhance flight attendants' perception of organizational support. Regarding the novelty of CWB phenomenon among developing and under developed countries (LasisiOlukayode et al., 2014) and the frequency of such behavior among Asian countries (Xie and Johns, 2000); airline companies in such countries should provide their managers with a holistic training program regarding the nature and important negative impacts of CWB.

9. Limitation and further research

This study investigates the impact of empowerment, reward and promotion as indicators of HPWPs on CWB through the mediating role of POS. It seems admissible to use other organizational level indicators of high-performance work practices such as job security, formal grievance and complaint processes, incentive pay based on performance, compensation systems and job redesign in future research attempts. Moreover, other mediating mechanism such as justice perception, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior are well-suited to predict CBW. Second, this study examines CWB as a whole construct, however, we suggest researcher to further develop the hypothetical research by examining the effect of POS on both categorization of CWB which are counterproductive work behavior towards organization (CWB-O) and counterproductive work behavior toward individuals (CWB-I). Third, CWB estimates were self-reported which raise concern for common method variance and social-desirability. However, it is suggested that the measures of CWB are best gathered using self-report, due to the fact that such behavior often take place covertly in private (De Jonge and Peeters, 2009). In addition, Berry et al. (2012) in their meta-analytic comparison of reports for CWB found that self-report provide a broader insight into content domain of CWB. Forth, this study used a psychological separation of questionnaires regarding independent and dependent variable to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, it must be noted that there still a potential for common method bias and bias due to social-desirability. Therefore, it is suggested that the further research use a comprehensive time separation to help reduce bias.

Finally, the non-probability sampling method used in the sampling process of this study to collect data from flight attendants in Iran, raised concern for the issue of generalizability. Hence, another crucial next step would be collecting data using other methods of sampling such as random sampling. In addition, it is suggested to select other countries beside Iran which are to some extend different in terms of their societal culture such as USA, China and England. Despite potential limitations, this study contributes to the CWB literature by incorporating POS as the mediator and HPWPs as an organizational or systemic level predictor of CWB among flight attendants in Iran. More importantly, result of this study extended the knowledge of the current literature by suggesting the mediating role of POS in the relationship between HPWPs and CWB. According to the results of this study, it is highly expected to motivate further research effort to investigate different indicators of HPWPs and other potential mediators to predict CWB, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Appendix

Scale Items	Sources
Empowerment	Hayes (1994)
I am empowered to solve passengers' problems.	
I am encouraged to handle passengers' problems by myself.	
I do not have to get chief purser's approval before I handle passengers' problems.	
I am allowed to do almost anything to solve passengers' problems.	
I have control over how I solve passengers' problems.	
Reward	Boshoff and Allen (2000)
If I improve the level of service I offer passengers, I will be rewarded.	
The rewards I receive are based on passenger's evaluations of service.	
I am rewarded for serving passengers well.	
I am rewarded for dealing effectively with passenger problems.	
I am rewarded for satisfying complaining passengers.	

(*continued*)

Scale Items	Sources
Promotion	Delery and Doty (1996)
Flight attendants have clear career paths within the organization.	
Flight attendants have very little future within this organization.	
Flight attendants' career aspirations within this airline company are known by their chief supervisors.	
Flight attendants who desire promotion have more than one potential position they could be promoted to.	
Perceived Organizational Support	Eisenberger et al. (1986)
This airline company values my contributions to its well-being.	
This airline company strongly considers my goals and values.	
This airline company is willing to help me when I need a special favor.	
This airline company shows very little concern for me.	
This airline company cares about my opinions.	
This airline company takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	
Counter-Productive Work Behavior	Bennett and Robinson (2000)
Made fun of someone at work	
Said something hurtful to someone at work	
Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark at work	
Cursed at someone at work	
Played a mean prank on someone at work	
Acted rudely toward someone at work	
Publicly embarrassed someone at work	
Taken property from work without permission	
Spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working	
Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace	
Littered your work environment	
Neglected to follow your boss's instructions	
Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked	
Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person	
Used an illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job	
Put little effort into your work	

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