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Impacts of supportive HR practices and organisational climate on the attitudes of HR managers towards gender diversity-A mediated model approach

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Abstract:

Using the theoretical lens of the Behavioral perspective on HRM, this study examined a mediated model to understand the extent to which organisational factors such as supportive human resource management policies and practices (SHRPP) and organisational climate (OC) can influence the affective attitudes of HR managers towards promoting women into organisational leadership roles. Survey data collected from 182 human resource managers in Bangladesh were analysed using partial least squared based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), and the Process macro to test mediating effects. The results reveal that the adoption of SHRPP is positively associated with OC, which in turn shapes the attitudes of HR managers leading to implementing unbiased promotional practices for organisational leadership roles.

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Introduction

Despite the continued growth of women’s participation in the global workforce over the last two decades, top management teams (TMTs) are still largely dominated by men, thus evidencing a significant gender imbalanced TMTs across the globe (Pape, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2019; Sherpered, 2017) and the same composition prevalent in the boards (Solal and Snellman, 2019; Hillman *et al.*, 2007). This vast under-representation of women in the senior leadership roles has received considerable attention from policymakers (OECD, 2015; ILO, 2019), professional think-tanks (Catalyst, 2019), and prompted incremental scholarly focus to understand the factors that have been adversely affecting their presence in the TMTs (Glass & Cook, 2016; Roberson *et al.*, 2017). A well-developed array of literature indicates that gender diversity in TMTs can increase firm performance through bringing informational and social diversity (Dezsö & Ross, 2012), implementing strategic change (Wu *et al.*, 2019), and accelerating innovation (Ali *et al.*, 2011; Quintana-García, and Benavides-Velasco, 2016; Xie *et al.*, 2020). Most recently, a study done by

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International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2019, p. 12) engaging nearly 13000 firms from 70 countries report that ‘enterprises with equal employment opportunity policies and gender-inclusive cultures are 60 per cent more likely to have improved profits and productivity’. Despite the positive effects of gender-diverse TMTs on organisational outcomes; women still occupy less than five per cent of the total CEO roles in the OECD countries (Catalyst, ILO, 2019). Needless to say, this disparity is much wider in the least developed and developing nations.

Drawing on the scholarly evidence (e.g., Pape, 2020; Seo *et al.*, 2017), factors those are contributing to the underrepresentation of women in organisational leadership can be categorised into organisational (macro) level factors such as HRM practices, Organisational climate (OC), and individual (micro) level factors such as attitudes held by the supervisors/colleagues toward females. Extant research indicates that, when compared to men, women experience ‘threshold barriers’ in the form of discriminatory recruitment and selection practices (Toren & Moore, 1993), as well as during performance appraisals particularly if the position has a prospect of promotion to the senior leadership roles (del Carmen Triana *et al.*, 2019).

The theoretical lens of the Behavioural perspective of HRM (Schuler and Jackson, 1987) assumes that employee attitudes and behaviours are major determinants of organisational effectiveness. This theoretical framework postulates that different strategies require non-similar role behaviours from employees for successful implementation. The Behavioral perspective of HRM (e.g. Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Kehoe and Collins, 2017) suggests that the ‘black box’ of HRM and firm-performance is not straight forward, rather this link is influenced by some individual-level attributes such as employees’ attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, an examination of the effects of supportive HRM practices on the employee-attitudes and behaviour leading to better organisational outcomes (Guest, 2017; Allen *et al.*, 2003) has received thriving research interest. Despite evidence of the effects of HRM practices on employee attitudes and behaviours, and ultimately on their performance (Biswas *et al.*, 2017; Boxall *et al.*, 2011), there is a need to unpack

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the mechanism through which supportive HRM may affect the attitudes of HR managers, particularly, attitudes associated with promoting women in TMTs, due to the proven effect of attitudes on people’s behaviours as postulated by the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991).

Extant research indicates that attitudes held by a male-dominated senior leader towards women act as a crucial deciding factor whether women succeed in gaining promotional opportunities in TMTs (Simmons *et al.*, 2019). In line with the TPB, it is worth examining the attitudes of HR managers towards women’s promotion, which may assist us in understanding future trends in women’s advancement into senior leadership roles. Though social processes have been used as a mediator in a growing number of studies to understand organisational outcomes, such as perceived organisational support (Liao *et al.*, 2009), employee climate (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2009); limited attention has been paid to our understanding of how social process interacts with the link between SHRPP (macro-level factor) and individual (micro) level outcomes such as the attitudes toward promoting women (ATTITUD).

To shed more empirical light on this line of inquiry, this study has articulated ‘OC’ as a social psychological process that mediates the link between SHRPP-ATTITUD. This unpacks the novel link explicating the impact of HRM on organisational decision-making (Boxall *et al.*, 2011; Gould-Williams, 2007), especially in a non-Western cultural setting such as in Bangladesh, an emerging economy in South-East Asia. According to Hofstede (2016), Bangladesh, like other South Asian countries, falls within the ambit of a high-context culture characterised by high power distance, masculinity. Evidence shows that Bangladesh is still largely characterised by the ethos of female seclusion and stringent patriarchal authoritarian systems within the family (Saifuddin *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, a majority of Bangladeshi managers tend to hold traditional patriarchal attitudes towards women in leadership roles and feel more comfortable to work under male bosses

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(Biswas *et al.*, 2020). This is despite the fact that the country has been run mostly by the female prime ministers since 1991 to the present day (except two years).

This study offers a number of contributions to the scholarly knowledge and practices. Firstly, it builds on the link between supportive HR practices and HR managers' attitudes towards promoting women in TMTs (Biswas *et al.*, 2017) using the Behavioural perspective of HRM (Shen and Zhang, 2019). Champions of this theoretical framework (Boxall *et al.*, 2011) have stressed upon the need to explore how HRM dynamics can influence individual attitudes and behaviour to improve organisational outcomes. Secondly, using the socio-psychological perspective, the mediating effect of 'organisational climate' (OC) sheds more empirical light into the 'black box' delineating HR outcomes. This study offers novel insights into our understanding that a supportive HRM may not directly influence managers' positive attitudes toward gender diversity in leadership roles unless employees have a positive perception about their work atmosphere (i.e. OC). Finally, this study reveals two important antecedents of the gender-impartial attitudes of HR managers to predict their future egalitarian attitudes and how SHRPP and OC can affect such attitudes to promote merit-based diverse TMTs.

Hypotheses development:

SHRPP and Attitudes towards promoting women:

Attitude refers to a value reaction to an object, an individual or an event such as behaviour that may appear as favourable or unfavourable (Ajzen, 2011). The cognitive response relates to the opinions, thoughts and beliefs related to the attitude, allowing people to psychologically process and recollect the specific person or event to which the attitude is connected (Boyle *et al.*, 2010). The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that attitude is one of the immediate antecedents of behavioural intention leading to actual behaviour. Ajzen (1991) argues that beliefs are evaluative responses and fall between positive and negative, including a neutral point. When people evaluate

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behaviour favourably, they tend to associate it with positive attributes and vice-versa. Therefore, in line with this theory, it is argued that the extent to which senior managers have positive attitudes towards promoting women to TMTs may lead to their actual promoting behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2011). Some evidence exists that 'women-friendly HRM practices' (Begum and Brindha, 2019) positively impact employee attitudes and commitment, thus leading to enhanced organisational outcomes. Scholars (i.e. Biswas, et al. 2020; Tatli et al., 2017) have argued that an organisation's vague HR policies and practices related to managerial recruitment, selection criteria, training and development, performance appraisal, career development and compensation have been major contributors to the glass ceiling limiting women's career advancement to the TMTs. Similarly, training and development of employees, a key dimension of HRM practices, plays a significant role in women's career progression (Baltodano *et al.*, 2012). Research over the last few decades indicates that to advance to the senior roles such as the CEO; entry-level employees need to gain extensive line experience in the areas of marketing, finance and operations (Linehan, 2019; Oakley, 2000). It is argued that supportive HR practices would be a critical success factor, particularly for women to acquire these vital skills required for career success, despite that many of those may experience a career break due to family commitments.

Extant literature has articulated SHRPP in several ways, however, for this study, the articulation made by Allen et al. (2003) has been adopted. They explained SHRPP involves employees in organisational decision making, facilitates employee development and ensures fairness of rewards, as well as career progression. While not presented as an exhaustive list, Allen et al. (2003, p.100) assert that participation in decision-making, fairness of rewards, growth and development opportunities (*including fair promotion practices*) are operationalised as supportive HR policies and practices. It is contended that when women are allowed to gain the required skills due to the presence of supportive HR practices, these reflect a positive attitude of top managers towards promoting women. Therefore, it remains imperative to explore the extent to which

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organisational factors such as SHRPP can influence the individual-level factors i.e. attitudes of HR managers to promote gender equity in TMTs. The following hypothesis has been proposed to examine this proposition:

Hypothesis 1: SHRPP will be positively associated with the attitudes of HR managers in promoting gender equity in the TMT.

SHRPP and OC link:

Attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theoretical framework (Schneider, 1987) posits that an organisation develops its human capital through attracting, selecting, developing and retaining its members. In doing so, it can hope to achieve competitive advantage by bringing homogeneity into the core competencies of its employees in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes. Further, to maintain a culture of homogeneity, organisational leaders formulate and implement specific policies and practices through guiding the behaviour of organisational members to achieve the strategic goals (Shao, 2019). Thus, the ASA model specifies a bottom-up process in which SHRPP contributes to human capital homogeneity at a higher level resulting in a positive OC (Cooper et al., 2019). According to Gray (2008), OC is concerned with employees' perceptions and feelings of actions by other organizational members. Kuenzi et al. (2019) found that organisational leadership has a stronger effect on the OC in establishing organisational policies and practices. Similarly, Haque et al., (2019) found that responsible leadership significantly influences employees' affective commitment and their intention to not quit their job. These findings justify a proposed link between organisational leadership, reflected through the adoption of supportive organisational policies and practices such as SHRPP, to create a congenial OC that is supportive of women in senior roles.

There is a contention in the literature indicating that there is not much difference between HR practices and OC (Cafferkey & Dundon, 2015; Rogg, et al. 2001). However, an array of studies

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demonstrate that SHRPP is an independent construct. For example, drawing on the internal fit hypothesis, Baird and Meshoulam (1988) found that HRM systems are more effective in a favourable OC. An organisation usually gains more from a sustainable positive OC, when SHRPP contributes to enhancing the knowledge, skill, and ability of its members. Besides, SHRPP has been linked to increased employee motivation. When employees are motivated, they are more likely to allocate discretionary efforts to make their work meaningful, thus leading to a higher level of organisational performance and positive organizational climate (Ogbonnaya and Messersmith, 2019; Cooke et al., 2019). Similarly, in line with the view of Aryet *et al.* (2012), we argue that supportive HRM practices provide a contextual clue to the organisational members that enables them to interpret their work environment (i.e.OC) positively. Based on the above theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: SHRPP is positively associated with the OC in promoting gender equity in the senior management team.

An increasing number of studies that draw on the behavioural perspective of HRM have examined how subjective impressions, feelings and perception of the actions of organisational members about the organisational environment, articulated as OC, can influence their attitudes and behaviour at the workplace (Gray, 2008; Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015). Scholars in this area (e.g. Schuler and Jackson, 1987) suggest that the ‘black box’ of HRM and firm-performance is not straight forward rather this link is influenced by a number of individual-level attributes such as employees’ attitudes and behaviour. Takeuchi et al. (2009) documented that the development of social systems among colleagues boost norm reciprocity, and thus contribute to building organisational citizenship behaviour. OC is more concerned with how employees perceive their peers, supervisors and overall work environment that can guide them in demonstrating desired behaviour (Gray, 2008). Moran and Volkwein (1992, p. 20) describe OC as “a relatively enduring

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characteristic of an organisation which distinguishes it from other organisations: and (a) embodies members' collective perceptions about their organisation with respect to such dimensions as autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness; (b) is produced by member interaction; (c) serves as a basis for interpreting the situation; (d) reflects the prevalent norms, values and attitudes of the organisational culture; and (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behaviour."

Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) suggests that organisational members tend to reciprocate efforts made by their organisation and exert the highest level of efforts only when they perceive they are recognised and rewarded (Gray, 2008). Positive OC refers to the positive perception held by the organisational members regarding organisational attributes such as HR policies and practices, leadership support, management concern for employee welfare and job autonomy (Bowen, and Ostroff, 2004). Research to date has revealed a variety of possible organisational factors such as organisational culture, HR policies and practices, and OC which can predict the attitudes of organisational members (Wallace *et al.*, 2016). Extant research indicates that OC influences employees' attitude, beliefs, values, behaviour in attaining organisational goals (Bowen, and Ostroff, 2004) thus suggesting there should be a positive association between OC and HR managers' attitudes towards promoting gender diversity in leadership roles. Therefore, it is argued that supportive HR policies and practices may be a major antecedent of OC to influence HR managers' attitudes towards promoting women, thereby proposing the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: OC is positively associated with the attitudes promoting gender equity in the senior management team.

Social context model (Ferris *et al.*, 1998) suggests that OC may serve to mediate the linkage between HR systems and organisational effectiveness. In particular, this theoretical model posits that the types of HR system adopted by an organisation determine its OC which, in turn, affects employee attitudes and behaviour, and ultimately organisational effectiveness (Rogg *et al.*, 2001).

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Sanders et al. (2008) indicate that OC acts as an intervening factor between the context of an organisation, argued as SHRPP and the attitudes and behaviour of its members articulated as attitudes towards the behaviour of promoting gender equity in the TMTs. Furthermore, some studies have used individual regression analyses that did not allow for examining the potential role of OC as a mediator on work attitudes (Glisson and James, 2002; Sabiu, et al., 2019). Consistent with these theoretical and empirical underpinnings, both direct and indirect hypotheses have been drawn in which OC is hypothesised to mediate the direct link between SHRPP and HR managers’ attitudes towards promoting women.

Hypothesis 4: OC will mediate the relationship between SHRPP and attitudes towards promoting gender equity in the senior management team.

Methods

Sample and data analysis

Over the period from September 2011 to January 2012, we invited HR managers, holding membership of the two largest professional HR bodies in Bangladesh: *Bangladesh Society for Human Resources Management (BSHRM)* and the *Institute of Personnel Management (IPM)*, to complete a self-reported anonymous survey. The key inclusion criteria for participation in the study were that the participant be involved in the process of promoting people to senior managerial roles and that he/she should be the most senior manager responsible for handling HRM functions within the organisation. To address our research questions, the ‘HR manager’ was the primary subject-target for this study, and our approach is consistent with prior research, (e.g., Collins and Smith, 2006; Van Buren et al., 2011). In smaller organisations, where there was no dedicated HRM Department, the proprietors (responsible for people management) were considered equivalent. The main justifications for only engaging HR managers in this study are that HR professionals are already positioned as ‘strategic partners’ of the organisation and assist the top line management team such as CEOs (Ulrich et al., 2009; Heizmann, and Fox, 2019). Therefore, attitudes held by

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HR managers toward female and other minority groups in the organisation may have a significant effect on the formulation of strategies supportive of gender diverse TMTs.

As noted previously, both HR managers and small companies' proprietors were recruited as survey participants. In either scenario, a filter question at the beginning of the survey ensured that respondents who did not meet the inclusion criteria should refrain themselves from completing our survey. In total, 703 surveys were distributed, and 182 usable surveys were received back. This reflects a response rate of 26 per cent, which is consistent with similar studies (Datta *et al.*, 2005, Boxall, Ang and Bartram, 2011). The majority of respondents were male (n=163, 89 per cent), over 45 years and had completed a Bachelor and/or a postgraduate degree (63 per cent). Half of the participants (51 per cent) worked in the manufacturing industry.

To examine the proposed research model to address our key research questions, partial least squares based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS-M3 (Ringle, Wende and Will, 2005) was employed. A two-step approach to partial least squares was applied to examine the measurement and structural models (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988, Chin, 2010). The measurement model was examined by measuring the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales whereas the structural model was estimated using the variance (R²), and the path coefficients against the recommended significance level (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin and Lauro, 2005, Chin, 2010). In line with the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2012), bootstrapping resampling (resampling size= 5,000) was employed using SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2005). PLS-SEM, a causal-predictive approach in estimating statistical models to offer causal explanations (has been extensive as it serves well for predictive purposes and clearly outperforms covariance-based SEM and regressions on sum scores (Becker, Rai, Ringle, and Völckner, 2013; Hair *et al.*, 2012).

Despite growing recognition of PLS-SEM in social science, researchers such as Rönkkö and Evermann (2013) have criticised PLS-SEM raising concerns over its validity and reliability as

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an SEM data-analytic tool. For example, they have noted that “the PLS path estimate cannot be used in null hypothesis significance testing” (P. 439); “the idea that PLS results can be used to validate a measurement model is a myth” (p. 442). This prompted them to conclude “PLS cannot be used to test models” (p. 442).

In response to these criticisms about PLS, Henseler, et al. (2014) emphasised that “PLS is not a panacea, but certainly an important technique deserving a prominent place in any empirical researcher’s statistical toolbox.” This assertion is based on cross-disciplinary research findings reported in HRM research (Ringle *et al.*, 202000), Supply chain management (Kaumann and Gaeckler, 2015), Marketing (Hair et al., 2012) and MIS (Becker et al., 2013).

PLS-SEM enables researchers to estimate complex models containing a large number of constructs, indicators, and structural paths without satisfying the requirement of the normal distribution of the dataset (Ringle, *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, According to Hair *et al.*, (2012), PLS-SEM analysis provides statistically robust results even when the sample size and the theoretical model is relatively complex, as is the case for this study. Therefore, the adoption of PLS-SEM seems the most appropriate data-analytic technique for our study to alleviate scholarly concern as to when to use PLS (Homborg, 2017). Further, the predictive nature of PLS-SEM allows us to gauge the mechanisms through which our independent variables can predict the attitudes associated with promoting women, which is a key aim of our study (Ringle et al, 2018).

Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach has been criticised for being the most conservative, thus producing the lowest statistical power and thus tends to result in a higher level of Type II error (Montoya and Hayes, 2017). Therefore, to assess the mediation effects of ‘OC’ on SHRPP and ATITUD, bootstrapped confidence interval (CI) technique was employed using the PROCESS macro (Hayes et al., 2017). Survey data were input into SPSS to perform the descriptive statistical analysis.

Measures

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Previously validated scales were used to operationalize the constructs in the path model, all of which are reflective measures. Except for gender and social desirability, all constructs used in this study were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha of all these constructs was more than .89.

SHRPP: The four scale items deemed suitable for this study context have been adapted from the study of Allen et al. (2003) to measure SHRPP covering aspects of recruitment, selection, compensation, participation, training and development. For example, in relation to HR policies and practices, respondents were asked to rate statements such as '*This organisation counsels all employees on career development irrespective of their gender*'; '*This organisation has policies that ensure equal opportunity for all employees*'.

Organisational Climate: Five scale items were adapted from the studies of Pritchard and Karasick (1973) and Muchinsky (1976) to measure OC. To assess OC, respondents were asked to rate statements, for example, '*Managers have freedom in day-to-day operational decisions in this organisation*'; '*The reward system of this organisation is fair and appropriate*'.

Attitudes towards promoting women: Attitudes towards promoting women was measured using seven scale items adapted from Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) and Ajzen (2002). They include seven semantic differential items on 7-point scales, for example, '*Appointing women who are well qualified to senior management positions would be*: defined by pairs such as *bad-good, harmful-beneficial, unpleasant-pleasant, useless-useful, ineffective-effective*'.

Control variable:

Some studies have found that gender has a significant impact on the behaviour of managers regarding ethics and risk-taking attitudes (Barnett and Karson, 1989, Powell and Ansic, 1997).

Gender was, therefore included in this study as a control variable.

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Results

Means, standard deviations, alpha values, composite reliability (CR), the square root of average variance extracted (AVE) and correlations for all constructs are presented in Table 1. All of the index reliabilities, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha exceeded the cut-off point of .70 (Nunnally, 1994). Consistent with Fornell and Larcker (1981), Table 1 also indicated that discriminant validity at the construct level is confirmed as the square root of AVE of every construct exceeded its correlation with all other constructs. Convergent validity of scales is also ensured with the value of CR for each of the constructs greater than .80.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The findings of our PLS-SEM analysis, presented in Figure 1, supported all the hypothesised direct and indirect paths in our research model. PLS-SEM analysis reveals a significant positive path coefficient for the impact of SHRPP on ATITUD ($\beta=.33, t=3.78, p<.001$) and OC ($\beta=.70, t=11.13, p<.001$), thus supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. PLS analysis also shows that OC is positively associated with ATITUD ($\beta=.20, t=2.02, p<.01$) thus supporting hypothesis 3.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Table 2 presents the results of the mediation analysis in which OC was found to mediate the relationship between SHRPP and ATITUD. All conditions the required for mediation, set out by Baron and Kenny (1986) were satisfied. Furthermore, the bootstrapped confidence interval technique (CI) was employed to test the mediating effect of OC on the link between SHRPP and ATITUD. Results of bootstrapped 95% CI for the indirect effects of attitudes (effect .35) ranged between .166 to .527, which did not include zero; therefore, hypothesis 4 received support.

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As shown in Table 2, the direct effect of SHRPP and ATITUD decreased (from b.48 to b.35) but remained significant with the presence of mediator i.e. OC ($b=.35$, $SE=.09$, $t=3.78$, $p<.01$); therefore, a partial mediation effect is reported for the supported hypothesis 4.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Performed power analysis ($1-\beta$) was performed to validate the results of our PLS analysis. Power test is generally defined as the probability of rejecting a false null hypothesis (H_0); i.e. the likelihood of obtaining a valid result (Trevino, 1986). Following Akter et al. (2010), we used G*Power 3.1.7 to conduct the power test (postdoc) to estimate the validity of statistical parameters. As a convention for behavioural research, the power for all the parameters in our research model exceeded .99, which exceeded the cut-off point of .80 (Hair et al., 2012).

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the extent to which supportive HRM policies and practices can influence the attitudes of HR managers towards promoting women in top management teams (TMTs) and whether this direct relationship is mediated by OC. The results provided support for a positive direct effect of SHRPP on ATITUD, and an indirect effect of OC on this link, thereby supporting all the four hypotheses.

Theoretical and practical implications

Our study-findings offer significant theoretical contributions and implications for practice. Firstly, the positive association between SHRPP and ATITUD indicates that when an organisation adopts supportive HRM practices, they can affect its HR managers' affective and evaluative judgments (i.e. attitudes) regarding promotion of equity and diversity in the organisational leadership roles. This result builds on extant research reporting that women's underrepresentation

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in managerial roles can be adversely affected by the negative attitudes held by their male supervisors (Tatli *et al.*, 2017; Jeong, and Harrison, 2017). Thus, a positive link between SHRPP and ATITUD adds value to this line of scholarship investigating the effectiveness of HRM practices on employee attitudes and subsequent behaviour leading to organisational outcomes. Our findings suggest that organisational leaders should be cognisant of the role of SHRPP in shaping and sustaining the egalitarian attitudes of HR managers towards promoting women. Such policies and practices are interpreted as the indicators of the organisation's values and priorities.

Secondly, a positive association between SHRPP and OC expands our knowledge about how SHRPP can contribute to a positive workplace (i.e. OC) that may allow the best utilisation of available resources. Research has documented the role of positive OC in employee motivation and creative utilisation of diverse-talents (Shanker et al., 2017). Our findings suggest that selection and promotion systems governed by fair and transparent HR policies may reduce discrimination, and thus create a merit-based positive OC for employees (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004).

Finally, the mediating effect of OC implies that supportive HR practice has a significant bearing on employees' perception of their work environment, which in turn affects their attitudes towards promoting gender equity in TMTs. This finding also suggests that managers' attitudes towards gender equity can be shaped by creating a positive OC. Findings of our study thus advance the view that transformational leadership demonstrated by the organisational leaders creates less incongruence between the leader and gender roles (Eagly and Karau, 2007). However, the supremacy of transformational leadership remains questionable because the effectiveness of this style of leadership depends on contingency factors such as its acceptance by the followers and prevalence of a positive organisational culture and atmosphere (Nekhili *et al.*, 2018). Our findings provide empirical evidence that positive OC acts as a mediator between SHRPP and ATITUD, thus reinforce the creation of a positive cultural atmosphere in adopting transformational leadership to advance gender-equalising attitudes and behaviour in the organisation.

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Furthermore, scholarship on the behavioural perspective of HRM (Shen and Zhang, 2019) recommends examining the effects of organisational policies and practices on individual-level attitudes to advance scholarship that has largely investigated the antecedent of attitudes at an individual-level factor. To the best of authors' knowledge, this is the first study that attempted to understand the possible explanatory variables from an organisational perspective and suggested that both SHRPP and OC can directly and indirectly influence HR managers' attitudes towards promoting women. Furthermore, from a practical point of view, it is important to understand these factors because HR managers are considered strategic partners of the business (Heizmann, and Fox, 2019), no longer limited to only advisory role. The findings of this study, thus reinforce the utility of shaping managerial attitudes to facilitate merit-based HR practices that ensure meritocracy prevails in all aspects of the organisation. One concrete recommendation flowing from our findings is that organisations conduct a regular diversity-attitude audit to inform the design of SHRPP, and thereby increasing the likelihood of positive OC.

Limitations, Future direction, and Conclusion:

Despite significant theoretical and empirical contributions, this study is not without limitations, many of which may signpost avenues for future research. Firstly, the survey participants included only the HR managers/equivalent working in the Bangladeshi organisations, therefore our results are not generalisable and a complete picture about the attitudes held by other employees, including other key decision-makers of the organisation such as CEO and board members cannot be drawn. Moreover, perspectives, and consequently the results may change over time due to the cross-sectional nature of our study, a common limitation of the survey research. A longitudinal data can help us better understand the changed perspectives to overcome many limitations of the cross-sectional research design.

Finally, self-report, cross-sectional survey data used in this study may contribute to the methodological biases such as common method and social desirability biases (Podsakoff and

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Organ, 1986). There may be a risk that measures of scales may be influenced by cognitive biases as respondents may shape their answers to present themselves more positively towards societal expectations (Thompson and Phua, 2005). Therefore, social desirability was also measured using the five positively worded items from the short form of the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Marlowe and Crowne, 1964) and a True-False scale as reported in Table 1. Harman’s single factor test revealed that no single component explained a major portion of the total variance. Harman's CMV test has come under criticism for producing both false positives and false negatives conclusion, particularly when scale reliability is relatively high (Fuller, et al., 2016). Therefore, following Fuller, et al., (2016), partial correlational analysis using a marker variable was performed to examine the presence of Common Method Bias (CMB) (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). We ran correlational matrix using theoretically unrelated factor i.e. ‘Technological Turbulence’ and found that the highest correlation of ‘Technological Turbulence’ against the study variables is .275, thus it is unlikely that common method variance has posed any CMB risks to the validity of our results.

It is worth noting that the cross-sectional study prevents us from claiming statistical inferences as to the causality of relationship. Bearing this in mind, a future study could explore the assumption that there might be a possibility that HR managers possessing positive attitudes towards promoting women may be more likely to create and adopt supportive HRM practices and positive OC in the first instance.

Despite these limitations, the study findings offer significant theoretical and managerial contributions to our understanding of the mechanisms through which SHRPP and OC can influence the attitudes of HR managers towards promoting gender equity in the organisational leadership roles, particularly using data from a cultural setting characterised by traditional patriarchal attitudes towards women and their career progression. A future study could endeavour to examine other palpable antecedents of gender role attitudes engaging other employees such as

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subordinates, supervisors, and how their attitudes can influence the promotion behaviour, adopting a longitudinal research design. Based on our novel findings, we suggest that some aspects of this study can be extrapolated to other developing nations possessing similar socio-economic and institutional environments to Bangladesh.

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Evidence-Based HRM

Figure 1: Results of the structural model assessment using PLS-SEM

[SHRPP=Supportive human resource management policies and practices, ATITUD=Attitudes towards promoting women, ORGCLI=Organisational Climate, Gender=Control variable]

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's Alpha, Average variance extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Correlations

Construct	Mean (SD)	Alpha	CR	1	2	3
1. SHRPP	3.77 (1.27)	.90	.93	.87		
2. ORGCLI	3.95 (1.28)	.92	.94	.69**	.81	
3. ATITUD	5.01 (1.27)	.93	.94	.48**	.43**	.84
4. Gender	1.12 (.320)	-		.30**	.26**	.14 ^{ns}
5. SOCDES	0.59 (0.25)	-		.22**	.30**	-.17*

^{ns} = non-significant, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.

[SHRPP=Supportive human resource management policies and practices, ATITUD= Attitudes towards promoting women, ORGCLI=Organisational Climate, SOCDES = social desirability.]

Table 2: Results of mediation analysis using Process macro (Hypothesis 4)

Baron and Kenny’s (1986) causal steps:		B	SE	β	t	P
Step 1 [c path]	ATITUD regressed on SHRPP	.48	.06	.48	7.36	.000
Step 2 [a path]	ATITUD regressed on ORGCLI	.19	.09	.20	2.02	.044
Step 3 [b path]	ORGCLI regressed on SHRPP	.64	.06	.70	11.13	.000
Step 4 [c' path]	ATITUD regressed on SHRPP including mediator of ORGCLI	.35	.09	.33	3.78	.000
Bootstrapped results for indirect effect [ab path]						
Mediator		Effect	SE	LLCI 95%	ULCI 95%	
ORGCLI		.35	.09	.166	.527	
[Note: N=182. LL=Lower Limit, UL=Upper Limit; CI=Confidence Interval; SE=Standard error. Bootstrapped sample size=5000]						

[SHRPP=Supportive human resource management policies and practices, ATITUD= Attitudes towards promoting women, ORGCLI=Organisational Climate]