

## Study of the Effect of High-Performance Work System on Workforce Productivity by Considering the Moderating Role of Organizational Cynicism (Shahidtondghuyan Petrochemicals Case Study)

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**Abstract:** Now a days the leading companies have understood that invisible capitals particularly human resources are among the most significant tools of obtaining competitive advantage and improving organizational productivity. Therefore, these organizations intend to increase the productivity of human resources by implementing work systems with high transparency and prevent negative views among human forces. The main purpose of this research is to analyze the high-performance work system on workforce productivity by considering the moderating role of organizational cynicism. The methodology of the present study is practical in terms of the purpose and it's a descriptive-survey type of research. The research population consists of managers and workers of Shahid Tondghuyan Petrochemicals. Mass of the research population equals 1220 and on the basis Kukran formula 292 questionnaires were distributed among the sample members of the research. In the present study, the researcher makes use of simple random sampling method. To collect the data questionnaire has been implemented and its reliability has been confirmed by the supervising professor and the experts of the field and also to confirm the reliability Cronbach's alpha and the results confirmed all aspects of the designed questionnaire. To analyze the obtained data in this research Smart PLS software has been run. The obtained results showed that high-performance work systems have positive and significant effect on human force productivity. On the other hand establishing such systems have a negative impact on cynical views. The results also showed that cynical views have opposite and negative impact on organizational productivity and ultimately the moderating role of organizational cynicism was confirmed at influencing high-performance work systems on human resource productivity. The type of moderation was negative which means the reduction of impact of work systems on human productivity.

**Key words:** Workforce efficiency, high-performance work systems, organizational cynicism, Kukran formula, reliability

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### INTRODUCTION

In today economic world where competition is the number one issue organizational success to a large extent depend on the product quality and high adaptability of the organization with the changing conditions to sustain their existence in such an environment the organization needs to be creative and properly make use of the abilities of its workers to solve organizational problems (Werner, 2011; Kaufman, 2010; Grant, 1996). In order to reach these purposes organizations should provide information, skills, incentives and apposite authorities for the staff to make decisions (Delery and Doty, 1996). Organizations which conduct such measures in their activities are considered as high-performance organizations. High-performance work systems consist of a special and precise combination of various activities of human resources,

work structures and processes which maximize the knowledge, skill, commitment, flexibility and cooperation. This system also considered as a method of thinking about the organizations that instead of adapting the staff with the technologic structure of the organization these structures try to have the maximum adaptability between technologies and processes and structures and external environment which lead to the optimal use of all of the resources and achieving apposite productivity of the organizations (Michaelis *et al.*, 2015). With all these explanations several researches have been carried out in terms of the human resources productivity such as the ones conducted by Huselid (1995) where in all these researches a positive relationship between use of high-performance work systems and work force productivity has been reported while there exists a gap in these researches. In these researches, the moderating role

of negative outlook and cynicism has not been considered (Wei and Lau, 2010). In these researches, the fact that implementing high-performance work systems influences the outlook of the staff and leads to various understanding towards such systems has not been considered. In majority of the studies the scholars believe that the rise of negative outlooks towards the activities of organizational managers and leaders can cause the reduction of organizational performance (Dean *et al.*, 1998; James, 2005; Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013; Pelit and Pelit, 2014). The staff who don't believe in the decisions and working systems of the organization and hold negative outlooks rarely cooperate at organizational activities and would be indifferent towards the organization. The organizations affected by such negative behavior would certainly be bereft of the advantage of the most significant organizational advantage that is the human resource (Nafei, 2014). In such situations, the role of managers and leaders is highly critical to create an optimal outlook. Because cynicism can act as a disease and as an epidemic act throughout the organization in case of loss of reaction by the managers therefore, those organizations where their managers and leaders intend to create an atmosphere along with trust and cooperation can benefit from active human resources rather than passive workforce. Many of the managers have created high-performance work systems to ensure trust and occupational security improvement. And those managers and leaders who can not run such systems within the organization would not be able to take advantage of the optimal use of human resources and would confront lots of problems to improve individual performance. The main issue is that Shahid Tondghuyan Petrochemicals is one of the active companies in manufacturing petrochemical products and it is in competition with several companies both inside the country and outside the country. Such companies in order to improve their performance need to reinforce their most important organizational capital that is human resource, the human resource that without any need to be controlled and with high commitment to the organization is serving the company and consider their goals the same as the company goals do their best to take every action to improve the optimality of them and the rest of the workmates. It is quite absolute that Shahid Tondghuyan petrochemicals company the same as many other companies has not been able to implement high-performance work systems properly because according to many experts active in this company there is no competency and transparency system in work affairs in this company. Therefore, the loss of such a system can lead to the fall of commitment and utility among human workforce and on the other hand because of lack of commitment and high trust lots of negative outlooks are

created among the staff towards the organization and the managers which can influence the performance and efficiency of the company within the competitive environment and put at stake the future of the company in near future. The main research question is that how much and how the use of high-performance work systems can influence the human resource efficiency of the staff at ShahidTondghuyan petrochemicals and the role of organizational cynicism in this respect?

### **Theoretical framework**

**High-performance work systems:** High-performance work systems that are sometimes called "high-interference work systems" and "high-commitment work systems" are systems with totally different outlook towards management compared with other systems and organizations. The purpose of this approach is to increase the level of organizational performance by increasing the interference of the staff. Although, human resource management experts in describing such systems have emphasized on the various management methods and features but Jeffrey Feferin the book of human equality has mentioned seven aspects of this framework: occupational security, precise employment, self-managing groups, decentralizing decision making are dealt with as fundamental bases of organizational designing, high payment depending on the performance, broad instruction, fall of discriminations, obstacles and broad sharing of financial data and overall organizational performance (Yang and Ok Choi, 2009). The main purpose of high-performance work systems is to create an organization that instead of relying on control, to be built on the basis of interference, commitment and enabling the staff (Darroch and McNaughton, 2003; Wright *et al.*, 2008). In companies with high interference the staffs consider themselves responsible in terms of the responsibilities they have and consider them part of the company success and they know more, they work more and have higher cooperation (Boselie *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, they receive power, knowledge and rewards for their performance at highest level. The phrase high-performance work systems refers to an approach within human resource management that tries to enhance the commitment and interest of the staff so that they spontaneously and without control pressure act in line with the organizational goals (Boxall and Macky, 2009). Therefore, administering such systems within the organization will increase self-reliance among the staff rather than other-controlling and improve the workforce efficiency. On the other hand use of such systems can lead to the rise of positive feeling among the staff towards

Table 1: Measures of organizational cynicism

Source	Index	Source	Dimension	Variables	
Kaifi and Nafei	I believe that the word and action of my organization are not proportional	Nafei (2014)	Belief	Cynicism	
	Whenever I think about my organization I am filled with anxiety				
	There is no unity between the policies and goals and actions of my organization				
	I see no similarity between the works that are done and the works that should be done				
	Whenever I think about the organization I feel tension				
	Whenever I think about the organization I feel angry				
	Whenever I think about the organization I feel very bad				Emotional
	When there is new facilities in the organization I doubt about its success				
	When the organization pays attention to us I and my colleges				Behavioral
	have meaningful look at each other				
	I speak with others concerning the way of doing jobs				
	The organization announce criteria for rewards but acts differently in practice				
	I criticize the policy and measures of the organization outside the organization				

the organization and preventing behaviors such as organizational cynicism, organizational silence, etc. Therefore, in order to improve the workforce efficiency and managing the negative outlooks such as cynicism use of such systems are highly influential and useful. According to the abovementioned issued the second and third hypotheses can be expressed as follows:

- High-performance work systems are influential factors on human workforce efficiency at Shahid Tondghuyan petrochemicals
- High-performance work systems are influential factors on human workforce cynicism at Shahid Tondghuyan petrochemicals

**Organizational cynicism:** Pessimist is a person who has a negative view towards most of the issues. Organizational cynicism is an outlook which creates mental distance in between staff and the organization and leaves a harmful effect on the efficiency and optimality of the organization and the job satisfaction of the workers (Arabaci, 2010). Principally, pessimist staff considers doing their responsibilities harsh (Naus *et al.*, 2007). If there is a broad cynicism about change within a particular organization there is a chance that the most competent and honest attempts to make changes within the organization be prevented by the spread of cynicism (Wanous *et al.*, 2000). Across the world several factors have been introduced as the causes of the organizational cynicism. If we divide them into two parts of organizational and managerial the present study is an attempt to explore some of the organizational factors which create organizational cynicism. Regardless of few positive results of cynicism which some of the researches have mentioned the organizational cynicism of any type leads to negative results for the organizations and the people themselves (Abraham, 2000; Kalagan and Aksu, 2010) organizational cynicism as a phenomenon which is a product of the organization gets formed as a result of several factors that on the basis of the present studies

they can be divided into two groups of personality issues related to the individual and the factors related to the organization (Leiter *et al.*, 2013; Chiaburu *et al.*, 2013). Although, it is possible that the tension-creating stimulants is the same for different people but every one reacts differently to each of them and in fact individual understanding and cognition of the individuals from the same situations are not the same which shows that individual, experimental and personality factors are influential in this respect. Among the potential characters of cynicism is the Machiavelli personality, type A personality, Paranoia personality and irascible personality (Bartona and Ambrosini, 2013; Qian and Daniels, 2008; James, 2005).

Cynicism can be the reaction to many issues within the organization. A number of issues such as useless and faulty efforts to make changes, large load of assigned work to individuals, unfulfilled expectation of the organization, low social support, insufficient promotion compared to the level of competition, contradiction of goals, increasing complexity of the organization, inability to make decision, lack of relation, psychological contract violation, low efficiency of the internal and external productivity, minimizing the company, company merging, power distribution, procedural injustice, weak organizational performance, leadership, vast authority at managing and compensating for the service and immediate and harsh firing are among the factors that can predict cynicism (Kalagan and Aksu, 2010).

At Table 1 dimensions and indexes of organizational cynicism are mentioned briefly. According to the aforementioned issues, it can be stated that organizational cynicism among the staff can be an influential factor at the behavior and efficiency of the staff and the managers in order to prevent it should clarify the work procedures, meritocracy and organizational justice and many other factors to manage and control such negative outlooks among such people. Because, there exists a view among the organizational scholars that in case organizational cynicism is not well manages and controlled within the

organization it can go epidemic and in this case the organization would fall in terms of the workforce efficiency then its control would be not only difficult but also impossible. On the basis of the abovementioned issues the third hypothesis of the research is as follows:

- H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational cynicism influences the organizational efficiency of the staff at Shahid Tondghuyan petrochemical company

**Human work force efficiency:** Since, among the production factors the human workforce factor in contrast to other factors is considered as the sentient and controlling factor of the other ones (Ellis and Dick, 2003) and it is the most important factor at increasing and decreasing the organizational efficiency it needs to be carefully attended (Wright *et al.*, 2008). This role is more considerable at service companies because human is the only forerunner of the activities at service provision (Connell and Hannif, 2009; Nicholls, 1995). Now, if this human is motivated and enables and efficient then he can properly make use of other resources and actualize all types of efficiency and ultimately make the organization efficient otherwise the deficiency and digression is the only reward for the inactive and passive workforce (Yang and Ok Choi, 2009; Lau, 2000). Also, the issue of its expansion at petrochemical sector because of its special features which include factors such as extreme limitation of resources, the need of the staff to the hygienic services lack of economic perspective and the necessity of humanitarian ideology at offering services the high cost of facilities etc. doubles the importance of this issue (Soltani, 2005). But, how does human workforce gets efficient or its efficiency is increased? Is a question whose answer is different from one institution to another depending on the goals and needs of the staff although it is possible that the needs and factors of them look like each other but their intensity and the priority of their influence on the efficiency of the staff is the same (Islam *et al.*, 2008; Francalanci and Galal, 1998). In sum, it should be approved that the activities of every organization are under the influence of a number of factors whose cognition and detection can be helpful at improving organizational activities and fulfillment of the goals. Since, efficiency is a function under the influence of several factors which are influenced by the goal, activities, procedures, etc., which differ from one organization to another and also the rate of he significance of these factors on organizational efficiency are not the same. Therefore, it is not possible for the organization to enter into all influential parts and factors. Necessarily in order to reach the highest level of efficiency first it should prioritize on the basis of the organizational criteria and parameters then codify required

administrative plans and programs to improve efficiency (Greasley *et al.*, 2005). By considering the fact that high-performance work systems as reported by different researches can lead to the improvement of workforce efficiency improvement and on the other hand the role of cynicism which can decrease the rate of efficiency among the staff as another challenging issue in the present study is that how is the role of cynicism at affecting the high-performance work systems and workforce efficiency. Does it have this power to be known as the moderating influence and on the basis of the aforementioned issues we might refer to the fourth hypothesis as follows:

- H<sub>4</sub>: Organizational cynicism has a moderating role on high-performance work systems and human workforce efficiency

**Literature review:** Michaelis *et al.* (2015) conducted a research entitled organizational knowledge as a key in the relationship between high-performance work systems and human workforce efficiency. The findings of the research show that the implementation of high-performance work systems can improve organizational commitment and consequently improve the human workforce efficiency within the organization. On the other hand sharing the knowledge and power can lead to the improvement of human workforce efficiency within the organization and finally the moderating role of the knowledge management and its procedures in relation with high-performance work systems and human workforce efficiency were confirmed.

Nafei (2014) in a study on the occupational outlooks on the relationship between organizational cynicism and organization citizen behavior which was conducted in Egypt concluded that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and organizational cynicism and the citizenship behavior. Pelit and Pelit (2014) in research entitled the impact of organizational uproar organizational cynicism that was conducted at hotels in Turkey concluded that there is a significant relationship between the aforementioned variables. Zhang *et al.* (2014) in research under the title of high-performance work systems on the social activities of the companies as well as human workforce efficiency. The obtained results show that the use of such systems can lead to a better social performance or the social responsibility of the companies and on the other hand the impact of it has been confirmed. Chiaburu *et al.* (2013) in a research entitled the impact of organizational cynicism and the consequences provided a framework for the analysis of the influential factors in this respect.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study is an evaluative research type and in terms of research strategy it is a survey type which

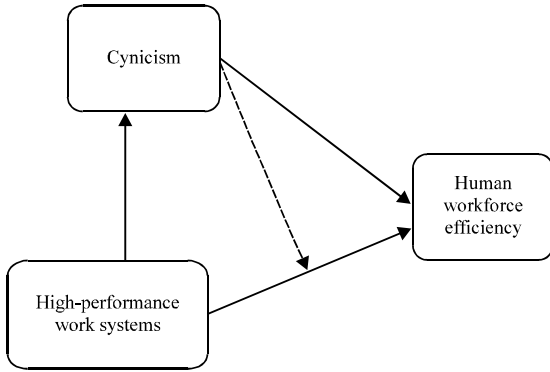


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of research

Table 2: Questionnaire structure

Variables	Number of items
High-performance work systems	11 questions (1-11)
Organizational cynicism	12 questions (12-23)
Human workforce efficiency	7 questions (24-30)

intends to test the hypothesis and makes use of questionnaire for this purpose. Conceptual model of this research showed in Fig. 1.

In the present study structural equation model with least squares method has been implemented to test the research hypotheses and for the same purpose SPSS software and Smart PLS has been implemented. The present study has been conducted among the staff of the Shahid Tondghuy an petro chemicals. By considering the mass of the research population which equals 1220 on the basis Kukran formula 292 questionnaires were distributed among the sample members of the research. In the present study the researcher makes use of simple random sampling method the reason behind, it is the similarity between the members of the statistical population and the research sample. To collect the data questionnaire has been implemented and its reliability has been confirmed by the supervising professor and the experts of the field. Questionnaire structure and the resources are presented at Table 2.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Descriptive statistics:** At this stage the author intends to have a brief look at monographic features of the research. In terms of the age of the participants the majority of the participants are between 36-45 and in the present study 130 one equal to (44.5%) and the next age group is between 25-35 with 118 frequency (40.4%) and the age group above 45 years old with 44 frequency (15.1%) have taken part at the present study and there was no participant under the age of 25. In terms of the second demographic question which deals with the sex of the participants it was revealed that the majority of the

participants are male. In other words 209 of the 292 participants were male and 83 were female which shows the higher participation of men in this study. The third demographic feature of the present study is that of education of the participants. In the present study from 292 participants 160 had bachelor degree, 76 MA degree and 49 associate degree and 7 had Ph.D degree that shows that the majority of the participants had bachelor degree.

**Inferential statistics:** In order to test the research hypotheses structural equation model with the least squares methodology has been implemented. But, before interpreting the model first the model needs to be confirmed in terms of measurement, structural model and general model so that the obtained data can be trusted in fact the reliability and internal consistency of the model should be proved and for the same reason at the measurement model Cronbach alpha index, convergent validity and composite reliability has been presented at Table 3.

The obtained results show that the reliability and validity o the measurement model is at optimal level because the rate of the factor load per question is not <0/4 and the lowest one equals 0/622 at high-performance work systems dimension and on the other hand the t is not <1.96 is the least value concerning the high-performance work systems which = 9.117. On the other hand, Cronbach’s alpha all of the dimensions are above 0/7, composite reliability is above 0/6 and convergent validity is above 0/5 which confirms the validity and reliability of the measurement model.

After confirming the appropriateness of the measurement model we refer to the reliability of the measurement model where two indexes  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  are used for this purpose and presented at Table 4.

And at the end for the general fitness of the model, it has been mentioned that in models based on the least squares methodology GOF index is implemented which should be >0/3 this index is calculated on the basis of the following formula which shows the appropriateness of it:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{Communalities} \times R^2} = 0.579$$

Now, after confirming the fitness of the model at three levels of structural equation model by the use of Smart PLS the research hypotheses are discussed in the following part.

As can be seen at Fig. 2 and 3 the t-value of the coefficient significance is reported and if the statistic is above 1.96 shows the approval of the hypothesis and the least squares model shows the path index which shows

Table 3: Reliability and validity of the measurement model

Variables	Load factors	t-values	Chronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Convergent validity
High-performance work systems	0.622-0.885	40.111	0.927	0.938	0.582
Organizational cynicism	0.870-0.635	12.197-45.248	0.625	0.952	0.944
Human workforce efficiency	0.833-0.765	19.734-29.919	0.898	0.918	0.617

Table 4: Structural model fitness

Variables	$Q^2 > 0.15$	$R^2 > 0.25$
Organizational cynicism	0.575	0.923
Human workforce efficiency	0.444	0.611

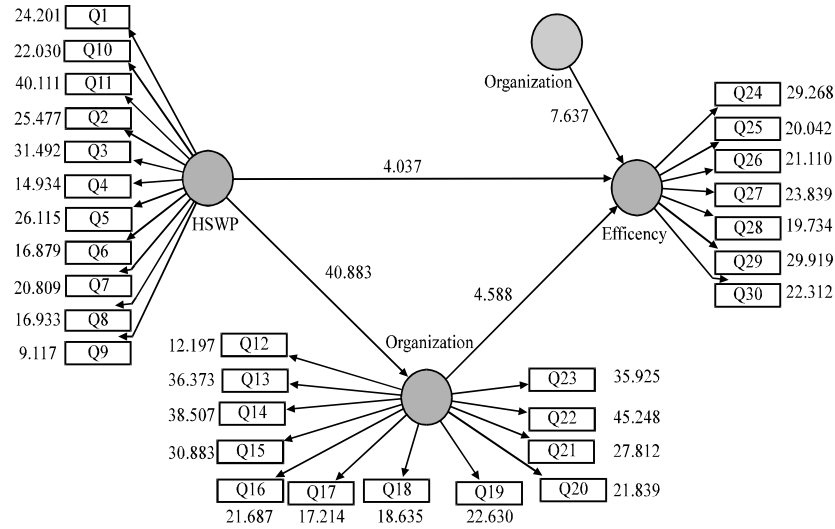


Fig. 2: The least squares model at significant coefficient level

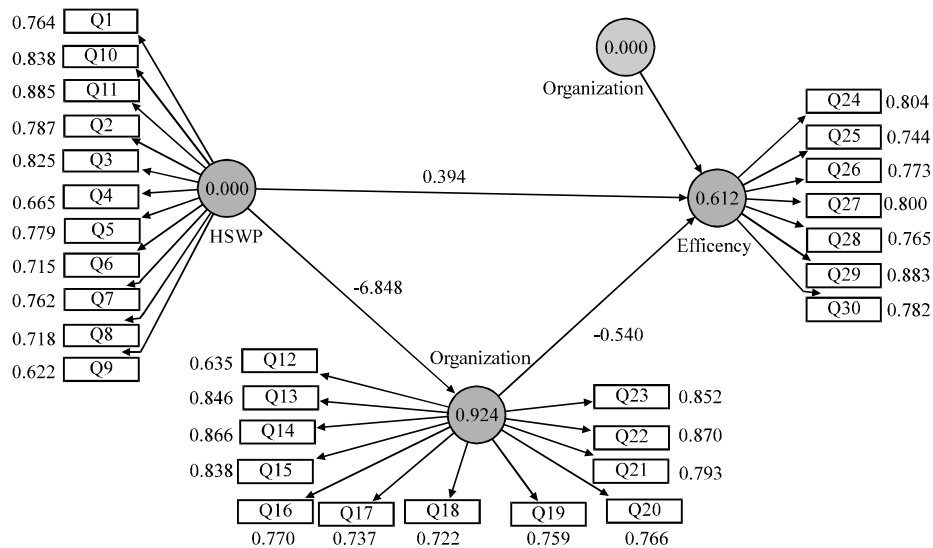


Fig. 3: The least squares model at standard coefficient level

the impact of variables on each other and in the following part the main hypotheses of the research are analyzed through a tabular format.

According to the obtained data from the least squares model, it can be stated that high-performance work systems are efficient tools for improving the human

Table 5: Summary of the research results at least squares model

Variables						
Hypothesis	Independent	Dependent	Moderator	Path index	t-value	Results
1	High-performance work system	Organizational cynicism	-	-0.848	40.833	Approved
2	High-performance work system	Human workforce efficiency	-	0.3479	4.037	Approved
3	Organizational cynicism	Human workforce efficiency	-	-0.540	4.588	Approved
4	High-performance work system	Human workforce efficiency	Organizational cynicism	-0.625	7.637	Approved

workforce efficiency in contemporary organizations. On the other hand these systems can leave negative impact on the creation of organizational cynicism. On the other hand the findings show that organizational cynicism is a negative factor in human workforce efficiency and the presence of negative outlooks can affect the efficiency of high-performance work systems and negatively affect the human workforce efficiency in this respect (Table 5).

**CONCLUSION**

At highly competitive environments of today the traditional competitive advantage resources of the organizations such as technology, right of privileges, etc are losing their efficiency by the globalization and other environmental changes. Therefore, preserving and attracting new, flexible and talented staff as replacement for these traditional resources can help the pivotal meritocracy of the organization. Therefore, managers have become interested in implementing high-performance work systems. Such systems at Shahid Tondghuy an petro chemical can lead to the reinforcement of invisible capitals such as human workforce. Researches show that implementing high-performance work systems can reinforce human workforce on one hand and on the other hand increase the workforce commitment and conscientiousness and this issue increase the level of workforce efficiency and as a result of that improve the organizational performance at international competitions. On the other hand implementing such systems can lead to the creation of positive feelings such as organizational citizenship behavior and a confidential atmosphere among the staff and this issue would lead to the organizational performance of the Shahid Tondguyan petrochemicals. Use of high-performance work systems can provide the required setting to prevent the negative outlooks such as organizational cynicism and organizational silence. Negative phenomena occur thanks to lack of transparency within occupational relationships in the organization and prepare the foundation for the creation of harmful behaviors such as indifference, resistance against the changes, lack of attendance at organizational processes, quitting missions, absence from work, etc. The purpose of the organization in implementing high-performance work systems is to manage the negative feelings. The managers

of Shahid Tondghuy an petrochemical should prevent the occurrence of such negative feelings by establishing such systems. The obtained results of the present study show that high-performance work systems have negative impact on the organizational cynicism because the t value in this hypothesis is equal to 40.883 which shows the approval of the hypothesis the intensity of the significance equals -0/848 which shows that by implementing the high-performance work systems the organizational cynicism gets reduced or in other words gets managed.

On the other hand the findings show that the implementation of high-performance work systems has a positive relationship with human workforce efficiency because the t-value of the hypothesis equals 4.038 which approve the hypothesis with 0/95% certainty which shows the positive relationship between high-performance work systems and human workforce efficiency. The obtained results show that organizational cynicism and human work force efficiency have a negative relationship because the t-value in this hypothesis equals at 4.588 which shows that the abovementioned hypothesis is approved and the intensity of the significance is at -0/540 which shows the fact that by the rise of cynicism and negative outlooks within the organization the human workforce efficiency reduces. At the end, the results showed that organizational cynicism has a negative impact on high-performance work systems and human workforce efficiency as a moderator. Because the t-value in this hypothesis equals 7.637 which confirms the moderating impact of it and the intensity of the significance is -0/625. In other words these findings show that the presence of organizational cynicism provides the setting to reduce the impact of high-performance work systems on human workforce efficiency. At the end, it can be suggested to the managers of the Shahid Tondghuy an petrochemical that to improve human workforce efficiency and finally the organization the negative feelings need to be managed within the organization. To this end, it seems that transparency at processes, rise of work security and organizational justice, implementing cooperative and meritocracy systems at Shahid Tondghuy anpetro chemical can facilitate the management of negative feelings and outlooks.

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