

## Article

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# An Empirical Study of Employability Security from Perspectives other than Training and Development

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### Keywords

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human resource management (HRM)  
employability security  
job attitudes  
turnover intention  
attitudes toward long-term career

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first one is an analysis of whether or not workers' employability security through human resource management (HRM) would form in Japan. The second one is an explanation of the effectiveness of employability security through HRM. The facts and conclusions in this paper were drawn by using 308 employees. For the first one, job security contributes to the level of internal employability whereas career self-reliance contributes to the level of internal and external employability, making the formation of employability security clear. For the second one, job security increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intention, through increasing internal employability. Also, career self-reliance improved all job attitudes through increasing internal employability and improved long-term career attitudes through improving external employability. As a whole, the results of this study can be said to suggest the importance of career self-reliance functions from an employability security perspective.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, as a result of restructuring, downsizing, M&A, flattening of organizations, increases in non-regular employees, and so on, employment relationships between organizations and workers have changed from stable long-term relationships to more flexible and diverse short-term relationships (Hiltrop 1995). Additionally, organizations' employee anxiety in anticipation of undesirable consequences such as job transfers or loss of employment has been increasing. Today, when the relationship between the organization and the individual has, in these ways, ceased to be a permanent and stable one, people who achieve results in their careers now need to be ones who can continue generating some kind of added value in their current organizations or ones who are seen to have marketability potential in other organizations as well. Under such conditions, the interest in employability has increased again.

Up to this time, employability has been used widely in organizational human resource management (HRM), government policies, and elsewhere, discussed from the three perspectives of the economic and social perspective, the individual perspective, and the organizational perspective (Van Dam, Van der Heijden, and Schyns 2006). In this study, we argue from an organizational perspective rooted in connection to the organizational strategies discussed above. The workers' employability security in an organization has been debated, like the two wheels of a single cart, according to the maintenance of employment within an organization (internal employability) and the attainment of employment with the same conditions or better in another organization (external employability) (Arocena, Núñez, and Villanueva 2007).

The higher the workers' internal and external employability the less chance there would be dismissals against said workers' will; also, if a worker were actually dismissed, finding a new job

would be possible. This is behind the fact that employability security has come to be considered important in place of traditional job security, chiefly in Western organizations.

Employability security refers to aspects of employability on which an organization takes the lead, defined as 'the knowledge that today's work will enhance the person's value in terms of future opportunities' (Kanter 1989, p. 321). In this study we will consider this topic broken down into two categories: internal employability security, which increases internal employability, and external employability security, which increases external employability. Today, in what is called the age of the organization, in which the career development of individuals depends to a greater or lesser degree on the organization, the organization plays an essential role in improving employability. Accordingly, for purposes of employability security, the organization probably needs to develop and enhance systems related to matters such as training and development, which constitute 'systems by which companies guarantee and support individual employability' (Hayashi and Fukushima 2003, p. 49).

But will real-world companies invest in improving employability (i.e., provide employability security) for employees even when considering the risk of employees who have acquired high employability and then leave the company? Prior studies that have analyzed the relationship between the actual conditions and effectiveness of employability security from their relationship to job attitudes and behaviors have shown that training and development leads to internal and external employability security and, in doing so, has positive effects on many job attitudes and behaviors (Yamamoto 2012). That is, to some recognizable degree the effectiveness of employability security has been confirmed from the dimensions of training and development.

But is it only an organization's training and development that increase employability security? Issues identified in training and development in Japanese organizations include (i) a shift from in-house training to midcareer hiring of immediate assets, due to the rising number of midcareer hires, (ii) increasingly active use of business outsourcing, and (iii) the progress of obsolescence of skills (Yamamoto 2000). For this reason, it is clear that it would be difficult to rely solely on training and development to promote employability security. Because the impact on the results of individual HRM practices when based on strategic HRM involve complex interaction between practices, they clearly differ depending on whether or not other practices are present (Huselid 1995). In other words, there is a need to make clear matters such as mutual interactions and comparative advantages with other measures. For this reason, this study is grounded in multi-domain research that considers HRM to consist of multiple domains and compares the impact of each domain on employability (Wright and Boswell 2002). This study considered three domains of HRM, i.e., recruitment, education, and appraisal/compensation, and selected domains from the perspectives of dependence on and autonomy from an organization. This refers to organizational

career development giving importance to job security and work life balance (WLB), which mainly leads to dependency on an organization, and that giving importance to self-reliance, which leads to autonomy from an organization. This study aims to elucidate two points—the feasibility of formation of employability security in organizations and its effectiveness—through HRM practices other than training and development.

## **Literature review and hypotheses**

### **Employability security through HRM**

First, we will consider the subject of formation of employability security in light of whether the HRM practice leads to increased employability. Job security encourages continuation of employment with the organization and is related to the life-time employment that was a distinguishing feature of Japanese-style management. Lifetime employment creates stable relations between an organization and its employees. That is, not only does it enable positive communication and long-term human-resources planning in the organization, but it also promotes training and development from long-term perspectives. Also, like highly enriched training and development (Yamamoto 2012), job security is included in high-commitment work practices (practices that encourage high commitment on the part of employees; Pfeffer 1998) and other practices studied based on the best practice approach, which sees the relationship to an organization's results to be universal across all types of organizations.

WLB gives importance to practices focused on balancing work and private life. Around the world, women have come to play greater roles in society. That is, women's years of continuous service have lengthened as the proportion of women leaving work due to life events such as marriage, childbirth and child rearing, and caring for family members decreases. Furthermore, some organizations are attentively implementing practices to promote WLB, such as setting up childcare centers on site and assisting with payment for childcare and long-term care services. Like job security, these practices also constitute a message to employees telling them that they can continue working in their current organizations with peace of mind.

Consequently, "organizational career management which values career self-reliance" (career self-reliance) refers to the focus of organizations on assisting individuals in career planning, which is autonomously performed by individuals as part of their own career development (Takahashi 2003). Today, during what has been called a boundaryless career era, with the introduction of changes such as the collapse of lifetime employment or the abolition of seniority, organizations are unable to promise individual employees careers in which they can continue stable growth and advancement throughout their lifetimes, and employees are no longer able to expect the abovementioned benefits from their respective organizations. The need for workers to develop

their own careers autonomously without relying on an organization has increased. Specifically, workers themselves need to design careers that differ from those of others, and make career choices based on these designs. Here the role of the organization is to support employees' own career development from the sidelines. Specific measures to achieve this purpose include implementing an in-house staff recruitment system in order to effectively utilize personnel with high (or specialized) abilities, conducting career design workshops, and so on, to assist employees with the thought processes and methods necessary to autonomously design and develop their own careers.

Now let's consider the relationship between these practices and internal employability. From the viewpoint of organizational career development, an employee's career has a certain orientation and a nature by which it develops and differentiates itself in a specialized manner through the accumulation of experience (Yamamoto 2008). Based on these assumptions, a career continuing for a long time without interruption should be more likely to reach more advanced goals. In general, it takes some time until training and development by an organization and an employee him or herself generate results. Also, an employee needs to work continually for a certain amount of time before demonstrating his or her ability in an organization and have his or her achievements recognized, leading to increased internal employability (which indicates the level of his or her evaluation in the organization). Job security intended to maintain employment in the organization as well as WLB-focused practices assuming continued work are likely to promote internal employability.

Against the backdrop of the flattening of organizations and rising demands for worker productivity, contemporary organizations demand human resources capable of performing everyday duties autonomously without relying on instructions from superiors—that is, employees capable of self-management—and, as can be seen in the spread of management by objectives, such human resources have come to be evaluated highly. This is, being promoted further by the increasing use of empowerment. Self-reliance in short-term work within everyday duties and long-term career self-reliance across the individual's entire professional life are inseparable (Takahashi 2003). Furthermore, career self-reliance is likely to contribute to internal employability (which indicates the level of evaluation in the organization). Prior studies have also shown that career self-reliance increased the level of evaluation inside organizations, a concept similar to that of internal employability (Yamamoto 2008).

But how can we conceive of the relationship between these practices and external employability? Dependence on one's current organization and loss of opportunity for autonomous career development through change in employment are identified as weak points of job security. Similarly, one particular characteristic of employee benefit practices (other than those required by

law) including WLB-focused practices is the fact that the more enriched such practices are, the less portable they are in the case of a change in employment. From the perspective of dependency on an organization, a focus on job security and WLB probably is not necessarily connected to securing high levels of skills in cross-functional job specialties across the company. That is, it is conceivable that the relationship is weak between job security and WLB on the one hand and external employability on the other.

At the same time, in recent years many countries have seen increases in knowledge workers having high levels of cross-functional job specialties useful across the company, as workers' years of formal education have increased. Also, the degree of freedom in the processes of generating results has increased as the number of organizations letting employees work from home has increased and many white-collar positions have become eligible for discretionary working-hour systems. Furthermore, the numbers of people considering acquiring high levels of cross-functional job specialties useful across the company and qualifications, including students and homemakers, is increasing. In these ways, the number of people oriented toward advanced work in which they think, make decisions, and solve problems on their own is increasing. In other words, respect for self-reliance has become important to motivating workers (Pink 2009). Since career self-reliance involves respect for employees' interests and aptitude, it is likely to contribute to improving their advanced cross-functional job specialties useful across the market – that is, to external employability security. Prior studies too have shown that career self-reliance increased inter-organizational career self-efficacy, a concept similar to that of external employability (Yamamoto 2009). Career self-reliance can be considered to promote external employability. In light of the above, we identified our Hypothesis 1 concerning formation of employability security.

***Hypothesis 1:*** *Job security (a) and WLB (b) increase employees' internal employability security, but don't influence external employability security (Hypothesis1a, 1b). Career self-reliance increases employees' internal and external employability security (Hypothesis1c).*

### **Effectiveness of employability security through HRM**

The second goal of this study is to explain the effectiveness of employability security as viewed from the perspective of organizational effectiveness. Here we ask not just whether employability security forms but whether it has a positive effect on an organization and employees. Making this relationship clear is likely to lead organizations to invest in employees so that employees who have acquired higher levels of skills through employability security will generate higher levels of performance (Kanter 1989). In this study we will analyze effectiveness through verification of whether job security, and other related factors have positive effects on employees' job attitudes

and behaviors through their employability security.

In this study, we used job satisfaction and organizational commitment, addressed by numerous prior studies, as job attitudes and turnover intention as job behavior. However, the time span covered by these is a short one, limited to current everyday duties and the employee's current organization. Since it is hypothesized that employability would impact career attitudes over a long-term time span, we added career satisfaction from the past to the present and career perspective from the present to the future.

The first assumption of the effectiveness of employability security is that job security and other related factors have a positive effect on employees' job attitudes.

Because job security means there is no worry about unexpected loss of employment due to an economic downturn or other causes, it gives employees a feeling of psychological stability that forms the foundations of their livelihoods through events such as marriage and childbirth. In addition, long-term employment practices can be considered to increase employees' commitment and cause them to feel that the organization they work for has a high level of cohesiveness as a group (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1996). The same is true of practices focused on WLB, which are oriented toward balancing work and private life. From this perspective, a focus on job security and WLB is likely to have a positive effect on job attitudes such as organizational commitment. As seen above, career self-reliance, which can be considered a contributor to internal motivation, also is likely to have a positive impact on job attitudes and behaviors. Prior studies have confirmed relationships such as the positive effects on job satisfaction of family-friendly policies (Yamamoto 2011) and career self-reliance (Yamamoto 2008), the positive effects on organizational commitment of job security (Wong, Ngo, and Wong 2002) and organizational career development (Paul and Anantharaman 2003), the positive effects on career satisfaction of job security (Yamamoto 2009), and the negative effects on turnover intention of job security (Batt and Valcour 2003), family-friendly policies (Yamamoto 2011) and career self-reliance (Yamamoto 2008).

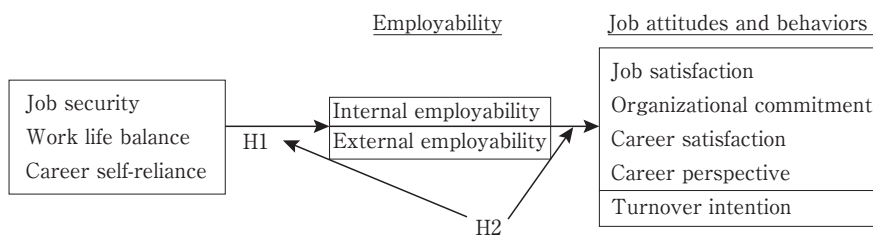
The second assumption of the effectiveness of employability security is that employability has positive effects on job attitudes and behaviors. This can be explained from a self-determination theory perspective (Deci and Ryan 1985). Perceived employability has a strong tendency to accompany a sense of being in control of one's career and it has been pointed out that this perception leads to happiness (Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth 2004). Prior empirical studies have also shown that perceived employability has positive effects on job satisfaction (De Cuyper, De Witte, Kinnunen, and Nätti 2010), organizational commitment (Berntson, Näswall, and Sverke 2010), and career satisfaction (De Vos, De Hauw, and Van der Heijden 2011).

A relationship has been hypothesized in which in an employment relationship based on the concept of employability security, employees can expect management to provide the support

needed to increase their employability and in return employees will commit to improving their own job performance. Because an organization that invests in improving its workers' employability is perceived as an organization that takes good care of its employees, it is thought that "social exchange theory" forms around relationships between employees and their employment organization (Blau 1964). According to this social exchange theory, a person compares the rewards and costs in an interaction with a partner, and if the rewards from the interchange exceed the cost, a person will be attracted to that partner. Prior studies also have shown a high level of organizational commitment when employees recognize the fact that their employer organization has invested heavily in their employability (Arocena et al. 2007). In light of the above, we formed our Hypothesis 2 concerning the effectiveness of employability security, based on this social exchange theory.

**Hypothesis 2:** *Job security (a) and WLB (b) have positive effects on employees' job attitudes and behaviors through their internal employability security (Hypothesis2a, 2b). Career self-reliance (c) has positive effects on employees' job attitudes and behaviors through their internal and external employability (Hypothesis2c).*

According to this hypothesis, internal employability mediates the relationship between job security, WLB, and career self-reliance and employees' job attitudes and behaviors. External employability mediates the relationship between career self-reliance and employees' job attitudes and behaviors. The relationship between these variables is represented graphically in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Relationship between variables of this study**

## Methodology

### Participants and Procedure

This study was conducted using a questionnaire research conducted through the Internet on monitors possessed by research specialist company M between February 9<sup>th</sup> and February 24<sup>th</sup> of 2012. The survey eliminated very small companies by limiting subject eligibility to 308 full-time



employees working in private-sector companies with a full-time staff of 30 employees or more.

The mean age of respondents was 45.9 (standard deviation of 8.2). Their mean organizational work span was 16.1 years (10.7). Men accounted for 86.0% and women 14.0% of total respondents. Their breakdown in terms of academic background was: high schools, 23.1%; junior college/vocational schools, 14.6%; universities, 53.9%; and graduate schools, 8.4%. Their job type breakdown was: sales, 26.0%, research and development, 14.3%; information processing, 9.7%; and manufacturing, 9.1%. These job types showed higher rates; however, there was a good, widespread representation. The breakdown of their positions was: salaried employees, 39.0%; assistant managers, 23.1%; deputy managers, 3.9%; section managers, 16.9%; deputy general managers, 4.2%; more than directors, 7.1%; and professionals, 5.8%.

## **Measurement Instruments**

### *HRM*

In this study we measured HRM using perceived HRM. Guzzo and Noonan (1994, p.447) define HR practices as 'communication from the employer to its employees', a purposeful signal to transmit accurately an employee's meanings and an aggregation of all planned messages. Accordingly, how a message is received differs from one employee to the next. That is, it is conceivable that the subject reactions (attitudes) brought about can vary with perceived HRM, which mediates between actual HRM practices and employees' reactions. Prior studies pointed out that perceived HRM, apart from actual practices, has a major impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Katz and Kahn 1978).

### *Job security*

In this study, we employed (here and in other cases) a five-point Likert scale on three items, revising the scale from Gaertner and Nollen (1989) ( $\alpha=.82$ ; for specific items, cf. Table 1).

### *WLB*

In prior studies, enrichment of employee benefits has been identified as a commitment-type practice similar to high commitment work practices and others (Arthur 1994). However, the scope of employee benefit management is extremely broad, including such factors as housing, medical care, childcare support, monetary aid for celebrations and condolences, asset formation, leisure, and it is difficult to examine in detail the perceptions of individual domains. For this reason, we narrowed the subject down to perceptions giving importance to work-life balance, a new movement in recent years centered on childcare support and related factors. We employed a three-item scale selected from Yamamoto (2009) ( $\alpha=.81$ ; cf. Table1).

### *Career self-reliance*

In a broad sense, providing opportunities for choice is a major requirement for supporting career self-reliance (Deci and Flaste 1995). This is because it is believed that by making their own choices, people are able to sufficiently apply meanings to the basis of their actions, thus allowing them to engage in activities with conviction. Accordingly, we employed the four-item scale from Yamamoto (2008), which inquires into the degree to which the HRM of subjects' organizations, including an organization's diversity management, job management, and assignment management, assigned importance to career self-reliance, centered on provision of opportunities to make choices ( $\alpha=.85$ ; cf. Table1).

### *Employability*

In recent years, factors such as advances in innovation have accelerated the obsolescence of individual skills. As a result, objective parameters such as qualifications and job positions failed to give clear-cut explanations of labor-market conditions when they attempted to foresee opportunities for actual re-employment (Trevor 2001). In Japan as well, having numerous qualifications is no longer necessarily a guarantee of the continued employment or re-employment of a specific worker. Accordingly, in this study we measured employability using perception of availability of alternative employment opportunities in the internal labor market and the external labor market (perceived employability) (Brown and Hesketh 2004). Referring to Rothwell and Arnold (2007), who argue that internal and external employability have two sub-dimensions, we employed a scale consisting of eight items of internal employability ( $\alpha = .88$ ; for specific items, cf. Table2) and five items of external employability ( $\alpha = .83$ ; cf. Table2).

### *Job attitudes and behaviors*

In this study, as in numerous prior studies, we employed job satisfaction and organizational commitment as job attitudes and turnover intention as job behavior. However, these were only short-term, and analyses were restricted to currently affiliated organizations and daily duties. Since employability is surmised to influence career attitudes over a long-term time span, we added career satisfaction from the past to the present and career perspective from the present to the future.

### *Job satisfaction*

In the present study, from an overall job satisfaction point of view, we used a 1 item scale which was "I am satisfied with the present job as a whole."

*Organizational commitment (Affective commitment)*

Organizational commitment is conceptualized by three dimensions; affective, continuance, and normative (Allen and Meyer 1990). Prior studies point out that among these dimensions it is affective commitment, which indicates affective orientation towards an organization, in particular that is influenced negatively by changes and uncertainty (Berntson *et al.* 2010). The present study adopts the 3-items scale out of the Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) scale, which was used in many prior studies ( $\alpha=.80$ ; example: "I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization" (Reverse)).

*Career satisfaction*

The present study adopts the 5-items scale of Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990), which has been used in various prior studies ( $\alpha=.82$ ; example: "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career").

*Career perspective*

Various scales were used in prior studies but an established unified scale cannot be found. Thus, the present study adopts the 3-items scale referenced by Horiuchi and Okada (2009) which seem to fit the circumstances in Japan relatively well ( $\alpha=.70$ ; example: "I think that the type of career I expect to have will become a reality in the future").

*Turnover intention*

The present study adopts the 2-items scale referenced by Van Yperen, Hagedoorn, and Geurts (1996) ( $\alpha=.77$ ; "I would like to take up different employment").

To examine the validity of the measurements by the above-mentioned five factors on job attitudes and behaviors in the present study, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis. As a result, certain levels of goodness of fit were recognized (GFI=.91, CFI=.92, RMSEA=.08).

*Control variables*

For control variables, I used gender, age and academic background.

**Results**

To examine the validity of HRM scale, a factor analysis was conducted (Table1). Since no ceiling effects or floor effects were identified for any items, a factor analysis was conducted based on the maximum likelihood method, using all items. As a result of a scree test, three factors were

extracted, and their cumulative contribution percentage was 72.5 percent. As a result, the first factor was interpreted as career self-reliance (four items), the second factor was interpreted as WLB (three items), and the third factor was interpreted as job security (three items). The italicized factor loading added items of more than 0.4 and formed each scale from its average value.

**Table 1. Results of a factor analysis on HRM items**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Factors</i>			<i>h<sup>2</sup></i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	
The intention about work style of every employee is respected	.90	.10	-.11	.81
Employees' intentions are respected in staff reassignment	.77	-.02	-.06	.53
Organizational climate is respecting an employee's individuality in how to do work	.75	-.04	.11	.63
Individual contribution to a company or job performance is greatly reflected on the determination of a salary in part time workers	.57	.05	.12	.45
Support for making a return smooth is offered as opposed to the employee who is temporarily separated from work with child-rearing, care, etc.	.07	.75	-.05	.59
This company accepts change of a temporary service form by child-rearing or care (short-time service etc.)	-.05	.75	.10	.61
My company promotes acquisition of a child-care leave or nursing-care leave	.05	.72	.01	.57
Long-term employment is secured	-.12	.02	.98	.87
It is premised on employees serving in a long period of time continuously	-.02	.20	.62	.55
This company has done all it can to avoid layoffs	.33	-.15	.62	.57
Correlation between factors	—			
Factor 2	.54	—		
Factor 3	.52	.55	—	

Note: n=308; The factor loading is obtained after the oblique promax rotation. Italicized values show factor loading more than 0.4.

To examine the validity of the employability scale, a factor analysis was conducted (Table2). Since no ceiling effects or floor effects were identified for any items, a factor analysis was conducted based on the maximum likelihood method, using all items. As a result of a scree test, two factors were extracted, and their cumulative contribution percentage was 57.6 percent. As a result, the first factor was interpreted as internal employability (eight items) and the second factor was interpreted as external employability (five items). Thus, the items surmised initially were split into two sub-dimensions. In other words, we confirmed the discriminant validity of both dimensions.

Table 3 indicates the descriptive statistics and correlational coefficients among variables of scale used in this study. HRM's positive correlation to internal employability and job attitudes, and negative correlation to turnover intention can be seen. And, employability's positive correlation to job attitudes can be seen. Adding that, internal employability's negative correlation to turnover intention, and external employability's positive correlation to turnover intention can be seen.

To verify Hypothesis 1, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was held with internal and external employability as the dependent variables and HRM as the independent variable (Table 4).

Comparison of models 1a and 1b and models 2a and 2b shows that overall HRM contribute to

**Table 2. Results of a factor analysis on employability**

Items	Factors		
	1	2	<i>h</i> <sup>2</sup>
The result and the ability in my work have received the high appraisal in this organization	<i>.84</i>	-.10	.63
I have good prospects in this organization because my employer values my personal contribution	<i>.83</i>	-.18	.59
Given my skills and experience, the company that I work for views me as a value-added resource	<i>.80</i>	-.05	.60
My company views me as an asset to the organization	<i>.76</i>	.03	.55
Among the people who do the same job as me, I am well respected in this organization	<i>.62</i>	.13	.48
Even if there was downsizing in this organization I am confident that I would be retained	<i>.58</i>	.21	.49
People who do the same job as me who work in this organization are valued highly	<i>.58</i>	.01	.34
I do not worry that I receive the retirement recommendation from this organization	<i>.46</i>	.11	.27
I could easily get a similar job to mine in almost any organization	-.08	<i>.76</i>	.52
In case I'm dismissed, I'll immediately find a job of equal value	.10	<i>.75</i>	.64
I'm confident that I would find another job if I started searching	.12	<i>.67</i>	.54
It will be difficult for me to find new employment when leaving this organization (R)	.17	<i>.67</i>	.38
If I needed to, I could easily get another job like mine in a similar organization	.07	<i>.65</i>	.46
Correlation between factors	.45		

Note: n=308; The factor loading is obtained after the oblique promax rotation. Italicized values show factor loading more than 0.4.

**Table 3. Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient among variables used in this study**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
(1) Gender <sup>a</sup>	—	—													
(2) Age	45.88	8.16	.16**												
(3) Academic background <sup>b</sup>	—	—	.27***	.03											
(4) Job security	3.16	.95	.06	.07	.08										
(5) WLB	3.02	.92	.02	.08	.25***	.51***									
(6) Career self-reliance	2.67	.77	.02	-.00	.13*	.52***	.49***								
(7) Internal employability	2.83	.65	.15*	-.04	.08	.39***	.24***	.52***							
(8) External employability	2.74	.75	.12*	-.05	.03	-.03	-.04	.18**	.41***						
(9) Job satisfaction	2.94	.88	.16**	.10	.15**	.40***	.33***	.46***	.66***	.14*					
(10) Organizational commitment	2.79	.81	.00	.09	-.06	.20***	.10	.34***	.33***	.00	.35***				
(11) Career satisfaction	2.82	.63	.17**	.11	.13*	.38***	.33***	.51***	.75***	.38***	.64***	.31***			
(12) Career perspective	2.96	.63	.15**	-.09	.14*	.26***	.30***	.31***	.65***	.41***	.59***	.17**	.62***		
(13) Turnover intention	2.77	.96	.02	-.15**	.03	-.39***	-.20***	-.28***	-.23***	.25***	-.44***	-.52***	-.23***	-.14*	—

Note: n=308. <sup>a</sup>1='male' and 0='female'. <sup>b</sup>1= "Master's or Ph.D." and "Bachelor's", 0="Associate's" and "high school".\* p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 4. Results of regression analysis of HRM on employability**

Variables	model 1a	model 1b	model 2a	model 2b
	Internal employability		External employability	
	$\beta$		$\beta$	
Gender	.14*	.14**	.14*	.14*
Age	-.06	-.07	-.07	-.05
Academic background	.05	-.01	-.01	-.01
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>1</sub> (Adj.)	.02*		.01	
Job security		.19**		-.13
WLB		-.08		-.11
Career self-reliance		.45***		.30***
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub> (Adj.)		.30***		.06***
$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup> <sub>2-1</sub>		.28***		.05**

Note: n=308. Variance Inflation Factor=1.04-1.60. \*p<.05;\*\*p<.01;\*\*\*p<.001

the level of internal and external employability. Overall, employability security can be said to have been achieved. Thus, Hypothesis 1a is supported because job security contributed only to internal employability. Hypothesis 1b was rejected, because WLB did not contribute to internal employability. Hypothesis 1c was supported, because career self-reliance did contribute to internal and external employability. Hypothesis 1 was supported on job security and career self-reliance.

Next, recognition of the mediating effects of the employability of Hypothesis 2 assumes the existence of a relationship in which (i) the significant direct effect of HRM on employability, (ii) the significant direct effect of HRM on job attitudes and behaviors, (iii) the significant direct effect of employability on job attitudes and behaviors, and (iv) the direct effect of HRM on job attitudes and behaviors would weaken when employability is added to the multiple regression analysis (Baron and Kenny 1986). Accordingly, in addition to case (i), a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted with job attitudes and behaviors as the dependent variables, HRM as the independent variables, and internal and external employability as the mediator variables (Table5).

**Table 5. Results of regression analysis of HRM and employability on job attitudes and behaviors**

Variables	model1a		model1b		model1c		model2a		model2b		model2c		model3a		model3b		model3c		model4a		model4b		model4c		model5a		model5b		model5c							
	Job satisfaction						Organizational commitment						Career satisfaction						Career perspective						Turnover intention											
	$\beta$						$\beta$						$\beta$						$\beta$						$\beta$											
Gender	.11	.11*	.04	.00	.00	-.02	.13*	.13**	.03	.14*	.15**	.05	.04	.05	.04	.12*	.12**	.03	.14*	.15**	.05	.04	.05	.04	.12*	.12**	.03	.14*	.15**	.05						
Age	.08	.06	.10*	.09	.09	.10	.09	.08	.12**	-.11	-.13*	-.08	-.16**	-.14*	-.14**	.09	.01	.02	.10	.03	.03	.03	.06	.06	.09	.01	.02	.10	.03	.03						
Academic background	.12*	.05	.05	-.06	-.09	-.09	.09	.01	.02	.10	.03	.03	.03	.06	.06	.09	.01	.02	.10	.03	.03	.03	.06	.06	.09	.01	.02	.10	.03	.03						
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>1</sub> (Adj.)	.03**						.00						.03**						.04**						.02											
Job security	.19**						.05						.06						-.02						.12						.01					
WLB	.05						.09						-.10						-.09						.06						.12*					
Career self-reliance	.32***						.08						.37***						.29***						.42***						.11*					
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub> (Adj.)	.26***						.12***						.29***						.29***						.15***						.17***					
$\Delta R^2_{2-1}$	.23***						.12***						.26***						.26***						.11***						.15***					
Internal employability	.63***						.30***						.61***						.58***						-.25***											
External employability	-.13**						-.16**						.11**						.19***						.35***											
R <sup>2</sup> <sub>3</sub> (Adj.)	.49***						.17***						.61***						.49***						.27***											
$\Delta R^2_{3-2}$	.23***						.05***						.32***						.34***						.10***											

Note: n=308. Variance Inflation Factor=1.05-1.83. \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01;\*\*\* p<.001

As a result, job security made a significant contribution to job satisfaction and turnover intention, WLB made a significant contribution to career perspective, and career self-reliance made a significant contribution to all job attitudes other than turnover intention, confirming within this scope the relationship in case (ii) (models 1b-5b). In addition, since internal and external employability made a significant contribution to all job attitudes and behaviors, the relationship in case (iii) was confirmed (models 1c-5c). Furthermore, with the exception of WLB, the effects of HRM were significant but weak after the introduction of internal and external employability

(confirming the relationship in case (iv)), and partial mediating effects were confirmed (models 1c-5c). For this reason, we conducted a Sobel test for mediating effects (Table 6).

**Table 6. Mediating effects of employability (Sobel test)**

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Mediator variables</i>	<i>Dependent variables</i>	<i>Z<sub>Sobel</sub></i>
Job security	Internal employability	Job satisfaction	4.14***
Job security	Internal employability	Turnover intention	-2.27*
Career self-reliance	Internal employability	Job satisfaction	6.26***
Career self-reliance	Internal employability	Organizational commitment	3.27**
Career self-reliance	Internal employability	Career satisfaction	7.50***
Career self-reliance	Internal employability	Career perspective	7.02***
Career self-reliance	External employability	Job satisfaction	-2.13*
Career self-reliance	External employability	Organizational commitment	-2.20*
Career self-reliance	External employability	Career satisfaction	2.61**
Career self-reliance	External employability	Career perspective	3.28**

Note: n=308. \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\* p<.001

As a result, Hypothesis 2a was partially supported because job security increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intention through increasing internal employability. Hypothesis 2b was rejected because WLB did not satisfy conditions (i) and (iv). Since career self-reliance improved all job attitudes through increasing internal employability and improved long-term career attitudes through increasing external employability, Hypothesis 2c was partially supported. Since the mediating effects of employability were confirmed in a number of relationships, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

## Discussion

First, while employability security was achieved through HRM as a whole, some differences in order were apparent. That is, career self-reliance promotes not just internal employability but external employability as well. We saw clearly that career self-reliance is an important practice serving as a platform for employability security. We also saw in employability security from career self-reliance that internal employability security was higher than external employability security. This is likely to be an encouragement when the organization carries out practical investment targeting employability security. In contrast, our findings also suggested the difficulty of securing highly cross-functional job specialties across the company through the job security practiced until now by many Japanese organizations under the current conditions in which a learning organization (Senge 2006) is desired. Also, employability security was not achieved through giving importance to WLB. Our findings suggested that while a focus on WLB does promote continued employment of employees as a whole, centered on women, it did not lead to increased motivation or a resulting high level of evaluation in the organization of individual employees. However, the focus on WLB as

measured in this study is limited to childcare and family care. Probably there is a need to examine the relationship between a WLB focus and employability for a broader range of practices. From the findings of this study, we can say that it is clear that overall practices from the perspective of autonomy achieve employability security to a greater extent than dependence on an organization.

Second, the effectiveness of employability security through career self-reliance was most apparent in long-term career attitudes. The possibility of continued employment with one's current organization and increased employability outside the organization due to career self-reliance can serve as a kind of insurance providing peace of mind for the future. It has been pointed out that self-reliance and a feeling of competence are inseparable to increasing internal motivation (Deci and Flaste 1995). If we restate self-reliance as career self-reliance and a feeling of competence as employability, then this study can be said to have made clear, for the first time, the fact that this effect extends to long-term career attitudes.

Third, in contrast we saw a "paradox of employability security" in which internal employability security (promoted by career self-reliance) has a positive effect and external employability security a negative effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are (short-term) attitudes toward one's current organization and duties. This resembles the 'paradox between career development and confidence' (Yamamoto 2008, p.259). This indicates that employability security is a double-edged sword to the organization. We have seen clearly that in the end, the (indirect) effect by which career self-reliance promotes job satisfaction and organizational commitment through increasing internal employability is stronger than the (indirect) effect by which it decreases job satisfaction and organizational commitment through increasing external employability, and when combined with the positive influence (direct effect) from career self-reliance itself, the (overall) effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment is positive. However, probably sufficient consideration must be given as an organization to cases in which, depending on the employee, the indirect effect of rising external employability is higher, leading to a worsening of job attitudes. It is anticipated that this point would be seen frequently in specialist positions such as IT technicians, for which cross-functional labor markets (career-change markets) have formed as standardization of duties has advanced. This is an issue that requires future study.

Fourth, internal employability security from job security increases job satisfaction, having a negative effect on turnover intention. In other words, we have seen clearly that the internal employability security from job security practiced by many Japanese firms through now has a retention effect on employees. However, no increasing effect was seen on long-term career attitudes, so that it was clear that the effectiveness of employability security is limited compared to career self-reliance. From this point too, we can say we have discovered that practices from the perspective of autonomy, more than dependency on the organization, increase effectiveness



through employability security.

## **Limitations and future research**

First of all, one topic for future research is an analysis of other HRM practices that lead to employability security. In prior studies, a number of HRM practices have been addressed in domains other than those analyzed in this study, particularly as strategic HRM practices connected to business performance in a broad sense. Examples include those analyzed as high-involvement HR practices (Batt 2002) and high-performance work practices (Huselid 1995), such as realistic job previews (RJPs), rewards based on fair appraisal, performance-based promotion, information sharing, and discretion. In the future, we would like to pursue a best practice approach for employability security through looking at these HRM practices as well.

Second, rather than a one-time cross-sectional survey, we should seek to implement longitudinal surveys. According to these surveys, it will be possible to establish a so-called “causal model” where we see how HRM affects post- (future) job attitudes and behaviors through employability security.

The third limitation is that in this study employability indicates a matter of personal perception, not absolute employability measured objectively. In the future, there is likely to be a need to measure objectively the employability in demand in each job type and specialty and study the necessary HRM conditions to improve it as well as practical management for that purpose.

Fourth, this is an analysis of the disparity in types of employment. Diversity in employment has progressed and the percentage of people who are called non-regular employees has increased. At the same time, non-regular employees are increasingly playing central roles in numerous industries and organizations, becoming an indispensable presence in the workforce. However, unlike permanent employees they do not operate on the assumption of long-term employment. Accordingly, it probably is important to work toward employability security particularly for non-regular employees demonstrating high performance, and to encourage their retention. There is a need to study development of practices for this purpose, including ones that must be addressed on a society-wide basis such as introduction of work sharing.

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