



Strategic Human Capital Management and Employee Satisfaction: A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Self-Efficacy and Cultural Values

Humaira Rashid¹, Syed Afzal Moshadi Shah², Prashanna Nepal³, Sania Arif⁴, Nisar Ahmad Koka⁵, Faisal Khan⁶, Ilknur Ozturk⁷, Khalid Zaman^{8*}

¹Department of Management Sciences, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Abbottabad, Pakistan, ²Department of Management, College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, Al Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, ³Department of Business and Management, Elizabeth School of London, London, United Kingdom, ⁴Department of Management Sciences, University of Wah, Wah, Pakistan, ⁵Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University Abha, Abha, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ⁶Department of Management Sciences, University of Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, ⁷Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Nisantasi University, Istanbul, Turkiye, ⁸Department of Economics, The University of Haripur, Haripur, Pakistan. *Email: khalid_zaman786@yahoo.com

Received: 05 March 2026

Accepted: 12 June 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.24330>

ABSTRACT

The study examines the role of strategic human capital management (SHCM) in advancing higher education performance and employee satisfaction in Pakistan. Human resource practices have been studied extensively in the past, while few studies have examined how SHCM influences workplace dynamics in complex academic settings, particularly in developing countries. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, examining the responses of 498 stakeholders, including academics, administrators, and graduate scholars, on SHCM processes. Survey results indicate that fair compensation, inclusive management, and supportive leadership are key to fostering job performance. Additionally, cultural values influence the employer-employee relationship, and self-efficacy mediates the impact of SHCM approaches on employee satisfaction. Qualitative observations highlight the importance of participatory environments and professional advancement. The findings illustrate practical ways for university administrators to develop effective and culturally sensitive HRM systems, contributing to human capital research.

Keywords: Strategic Human Capital Management, Employee Satisfaction, Employee-Employer Relationship, Rewards, Cultural Values, Self-Efficacy, Higher Education Institutions

JEL Classifications: D23, J24, M14

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic human capital management (SHCM) is becoming increasingly important for organizational effectiveness in knowledge-intensive businesses, such as those involving academia-industry linkages. Institutions must develop comprehensive human capital management strategies in a world of rapid digital innovation, competitive academic environments, and shifting

worker expectations (Alfawaire and Atan, 2021). SHCM extends beyond traditional human resource management by linking worker development, engagement, and welfare to the institution's goals. This strategic alignment is crucial at higher education institutions (HEIs), as the productivity and satisfaction of academic and administrative staff directly impact the reputation, research output, and student achievement. Despite its growing relevance, there is limited evidence of SHCM's influence on employment

outcomes in higher education in emerging countries, particularly in South Asia (Sharif et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2024). HEIs in Pakistan face challenges such as rising enrollment, reduced funding, and global competition. Strategic human resource policies significantly impact institutional performance and employee satisfaction; therefore, understanding these policies is crucial to organizational effectiveness. This study examines SHCM practices, employee satisfaction, and institutional performance to bridge this information gap, focusing on cultural values and self-efficacy as moderators and mediators. The study's theoretical and practical findings provide valuable insights into human resource approaches. It advances the strategic management and human capital literature by offering non-Western perspectives. It offers evidence-based advice for policymakers and university administrators on creating friendly, adaptive, and productive learning environments. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how SHCM can be applied in higher education in Pakistan and other similar contexts, addressing evolving needs in institutional settings.

Human resource management is increasingly important because effective HRM practices drive long-term economic success. Strategic HRM investments may increase firm performance and competitiveness. The complexity and unpredictability of globalization prompt businesses to adapt swiftly in order to compete in the global market (Sadikin et al., 2023). Geethanjali et al. (2024) stated that HR methods enhance company performance by aligning policies with business objectives. As the business landscape evolves, human resource management must develop sound human capital strategies, adopt modern marketing methods, integrate advanced technology into daily operations, and adapt to new automation trends, such as robotics, to manage workflow. According to Kaur and Gandolfi (2023), these evolving roles of human resources reflect the increasing need for digital literacy and strategic agility in SHCM frameworks. Kumari and Kumar (2023) argued that motivation improves working conditions and helps schools achieve their objectives. Jahmani et al. (2023) stated that several linked factors determine an organization's strength and success, including the job satisfaction of higher education professionals and institutional support, which impact human capital development. Knowledge management strategies indirectly affect cross-cultural company performance via employee satisfaction. Staff development and training are crucial as HRM methods that enabled remote work allowed firms to continue functioning and the public to remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hamouche, 2023). This highlighted the challenges of maintaining performance and productivity in dynamic environments. Sustainable HRM (SHRM) views workers as assets that contribute to a lasting organizational culture; therefore, it prioritizes employees' desires, needs, and perspectives. E-HRM systems enhance corporate performance by positively impacting employee satisfaction and productivity (Nyathi and Kekwaletswe, 2024).

The study addressed the following research concerns within the context of evolving workforce management, technology, and globalization. First, how do employee-employer relationships, rewards, and SHCM impact employee satisfaction in Pakistan's HEIs? Given globalization and technological advancements,

this study examines how effective HR management affects organizational success. Second, how do cultural values moderate the relationship between employee-employer relationships and employee satisfaction in HEIs? This examines how organizational support systems impact employee motivation and performance in academia. Third, to what extent does self-efficacy mediate the effects of SHCM on employee satisfaction in Pakistan's HEIs? Aligning human resource strategies with corporate goals is crucial in today's digital, competitive market. This examines how employee outcomes influence sustainable HR strategies and business performance. Globalization and technological advancements have led researchers to explore how strategic human resource management affects organizational performance and competitive advantage. Based on the stated research questions, the following are the study's objectives:

1. To investigate the direct effects of employee-employer relationships, rewards, and SHCM strategies on employee satisfaction in Pakistan's HEIs.
2. To examine the moderating role of cultural values in the relationship between employee-employer relationships and employee satisfaction.
3. To evaluate the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between SHCM and employee satisfaction in HEIs.

The study's practical recommendations help policymakers and administrators develop culturally relevant SHCM policies that foster employee satisfaction and institutional success. Their efforts advance academic understanding and provide the framework for similar research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical underpinnings, notably SHCM at Pakistan's HEIs, shape this study's conceptual framework. Human Capital Theory provides the best foundation for understanding how strategic human capital expenditures may improve company performance and employee satisfaction. Becker's (2009) work inspired the human capital theory, which promotes employee development to enhance organizational performance. According to this theory, success in higher education depends on intellectual and professional capacities; therefore, SHCM tactics such as training, mentorship, and career advancement are particularly relevant. Institutional goals that support human capital development can foster employee happiness and retention (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Cultural theory examines how cultural values indirectly affect workplace dynamics and attitudes. In Pakistan, a collectivist society, interpersonal harmony, community orientation, and respect for hierarchy greatly affect employee-employer relationships. Culture moderates the efficacy of SHCM techniques, as Hofstede (1984) stated that national culture dimensions—collectivism and power distance—explain this phenomenon. Collective societies may have happier workers if awards are focused on team performance rather than individual achievement. This theory supports the study's central claim that cultural values moderate organizational practices by illustrating how cultural settings impact business outcomes. Human capital theory and cultural theory are used in this study to bridge the gap between global-scale theoretical constructs

and their localized applications. Human capital theory offers a fundamental justification for investing in people, whereas cultural theory ensures that Pakistan's distinctive cultural norms are incorporated (Waheed and Zhang, 2022). Combining two theories, this study improves its predictions about how SHCM strategies, perks, and employee-employer relationships affect job satisfaction. The interactions between these theories illuminate both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators, complicating the relationship between organizational practices and employee outcomes.

According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, this framework also supports the mediating role of self-efficacy, which is the belief that one can succeed, affecting motivation, behavior, and performance. SHCM relies on self-efficacy to link organizational strategy to employee satisfaction. Professional development activities that enhance employees' knowledge and skills can reinforce their self-efficacy, resulting in improved job satisfaction and productivity (Van Tam, 2024). Employees in higher education routinely encounter intricate and diverse situations, making this mediating influence all the more crucial. Encouraging self-efficacy can help workers overcome these issues and boost organizational performance. Cultural values moderate the success of SHCM methods and other organizational practices. In societies with high power distance, workers may seek hierarchical connections and recognition from leadership (Farooq and Tripathi, 2024). In low-power-distance environments, collaborative and participatory management may be more effective. This study employs cultural theory to examine cultural values as a moderator, providing practical guidance for tailoring SHCM strategies to Pakistan's cultural context. This approach ensures that the study's findings are theoretically robust and practically relevant.

Employee satisfaction and organizational performance depend on employer-employee relationships, the foundation of organizational dynamics. HEIs emphasize intellectual engagement and mutual respect, making employee-employer relationships crucial (Yesufu and Alajlani, 2024). Open communication, trust, and mutual understanding may strengthen employer-employee relationships. High morale, minimal turnover, and a strong sense of belonging are all fostered by good connections, which inspire employees. Strong employee-employer relationships are crucial in Pakistan's higher education sector, as workers often face limited resources and bureaucratic hurdles. Culture influences workers' expectations and perceptions of managerial action (Fawehinmi et al., 2024). Malik et al. (2023) examined faculty satisfaction with HRM policies and practices at private institutions in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The results suggest that private schools should prioritize HRM to improve staff development and institutional growth, as teacher satisfaction and academic success depend on it. Hazeen Fathima and Umarani (2023) examined performance management, wage equality, and employee relations from the standpoint of Indian construction engineers. Their study shows that engineers' intentions to stay with their present employer depend on the fairness of these processes. If management treats employees fairly, they tend to stay. This research explains how HRM justice influences construction crew retention, laying the groundwork for initiatives that enhance engineers' job satisfaction and retention. Ahmad et al. (2023) examined the employability, organizational commitment, and

HRM practices of sports graduates. Their study reveals that employability acts as a mediator between HR management and organizational commitment. These findings enhance student interest and employability by enabling institutions to tailor courses to meet the needs of local companies.

Motivating and inspiring employees requires bonuses and incentives, as these programs attract, retain, and motivate workers. Higher education institutions must provide competitive salaries, health insurance, retirement benefits, and professional development opportunities to meet the needs of both academic and administrative staff. Non-monetary advantages, such as public recognition, professional growth opportunities, and work-life balance initiatives, make employees happier (Binghay, 2022). Due to budget constraints, Pakistan's universities and colleges cannot afford to offer substantial scholarships and other financial assistance. Creative, non-monetary incentive systems may be beneficial in this situation. Research indicates that incentive systems should align with cultural norms to be most effective (Xu et al., 2021). Collectivist countries, such as Pakistan, value teamwork and public recognition above individual accomplishments. These results emphasize the necessity for reward schemes that incorporate cultural norms and address both intrinsic and extrinsic worker motivations. Haque (2023), in a study of modern firm retention methods, emphasized the importance of healthy employer-employee relations. The study highlights effective retention methods and provides recommendations for enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity. Fitri (2024) examined how compensation constraints affect employee retention in the food business. Employee retention was most significantly affected by professional advancement, healthcare benefits, flexible schedules, and competitive compensation. Although the food business was competitive, wage practices proved the most effective at retaining workers.

2.1. Hypotheses Development

SHCM is essential in today's knowledge-driven and competitive economy, particularly for HEIs. This study applies human capital theory to argue that investing in people through structured learning, fair remuneration, career advancement, and supportive work environments can enhance performance and employee satisfaction. According to Becker (2009), any economy benefits from people's knowledge, skills, and talents; such investments in intellectually labor-intensive HEIs help reproduce sustained growth. Supportive leadership positively impacts the emotional and professional well-being of academic and administrative staff at HEIs, enabling them to work diligently. Compensation, recognition, and incentives continue to influence employees' perceptions of the organization significantly. SHCM frameworks extend beyond economic transactions to convey organizational value, trust, and future investment in individuals through both physical and intangible incentives. Since incentives promote creativity and knowledge sharing, HEIs must align pay with expectations. Based on this view, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H₁: Strategic human capital management practices, supervisor-employee relationships, and compensation and incentives positively impact employee satisfaction in higher education institutions.

The study employs the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that self-confidence influences job motivation, behavior, and emotions. Mentorship, performance review, and skill development are more effective in SHCM contexts for self-efficacy-driven workers. Self-efficacy affects employees' perceptions of challenges and resilience in achieving goals. Positive supervisor connections enhance job satisfaction, another key component of SHCM. The mediation hypothesis is as follows: H₂: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between strategic human capital management practices and employee satisfaction.

Cultural theory (Douglas, 2013) critiques the ways social and cultural elements affect business in collectivist societies; loyalty, respect for authority, community emphasis, and indirect communication shape workers' expectations of leadership, justice, and acknowledgment. Cultural norms can either enhance or hinder SHCM processes. Praise and tranquil workplaces may be more essential in a collectivist society than performance-based rewards, which may motivate individuals. Thus, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H₃: Cultural values moderate the relationship between SHCM practices and employee satisfaction.

These theories provide a comprehensive framework by integrating strategic HRM with environmental and psychological factors. The research integrates human capital, self-efficacy, and cultural theories into academic and professional HRM literature. This multidimensional technique helps understand HEI employee satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for the study.

The current literature on SHCM, employee satisfaction, and corporate performance reveals significant research gaps. Since most SHCM research has focused on specific businesses or regions, its generalizability remains to be established (Ghlichlee and Goodarzi, 2023; Ray et al., 2023). Most studies have focused on private-sector enterprises or larger firms (Dwikat et al., 2023); thus, more is needed to know how SHCM influences organizational performance and employee satisfaction in Pakistan's HEIs. Pakistan's universities have received little attention in the literature; thus, this study addresses this gap. Despite considerable

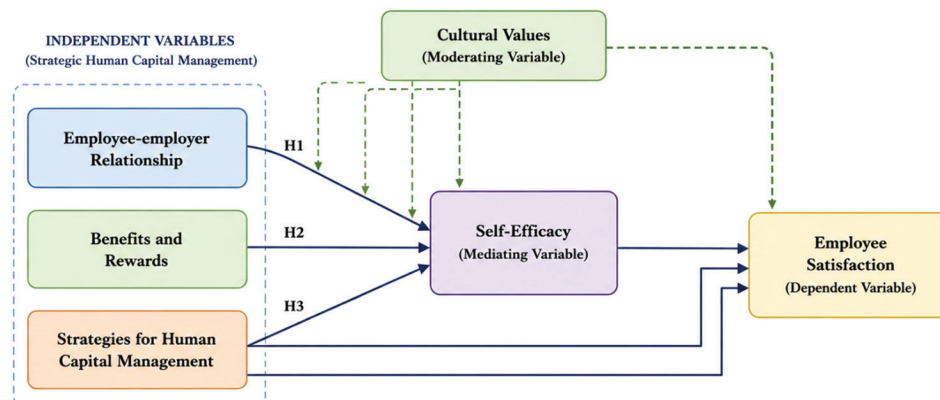
research on SHCM procedures and employee happiness, only a few comprehensive studies incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods (Abellán-Sevilla and Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, 2023; Martínez-Falcó et al., 2024). This study used quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with academic professors, faculty members, graduate students, administrative staff, and other stakeholders. Further research is needed on how benefit packages impact organizational performance and employee satisfaction in academia. This study demonstrates that offering competitive salaries, comprehensive health benefits, and flexible work arrangements enhances employee satisfaction and improves business performance. The survey also reveals a lack of understanding of how SHCM procedures and workplace culture impact organizational performance (Aggarwal and Agarwala, 2023). The effects of SHCM on organizational performance have yet to be thoroughly studied, although the influence of culture on employee engagement has been extensively examined (Sypniewska et al., 2023; Nguyen and Nguyen, 2023). This study addresses that gap by examining how business culture affects SHCM practices and organizational performance, revealing how culture can either boost or hinder SHCM initiatives.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Population and Sample

The study surveys a broad sample of interested groups to obtain diverse perspectives on SHCM at Pakistani institutions. The population includes academic Professors, think tanks, administrators, instructors, and graduate students. These groups' diverse viewpoints illuminate SHCM techniques and their influence on institutional functioning. Table 1 lists the study institutes and sample dispersion. The sample was carefully selected from different Pakistani universities and postgraduate colleges, including Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Haripur University, Hazara University, Wah University, COMSATS University Islamabad, and the Government Postgraduate Colleges in Abbottabad, Haripur, and Hazara. The research surveyed 644 individuals, including 67 academic Professors, 58 administrative staff, 495 graduate students, and 24 advocacy groups. Institutions include a broad spectrum of academic and administrative contexts, providing a dynamic picture of SHCM.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study



Source: Author's work

Table 1: Target institutions and sample distribution

Institutions	Academic professors	Administrative staff	Graduate students	Think tanks	Total participants
Abbottabad University of Science and Technology	10	8	70	5	93
The University of Haripur	9	7	65	4	85
Hazara University	8	6	60	3	77
University of Wah	7	5	55	2	69
COMSATS University Islamabad	12	9	75	6	102
Government Postgraduate College Abbottabad	6	5	50	2	63
Government Postgraduate College Haripur	5	4	45	1	55
Government Postgraduate College Hazara	5	4	40	1	50
Total	67	58	495	24	644

Source: Author's survey

3.2. Sampling Technique

A stratified random sample was employed to represent the whole population. The sample frame included target universities' administrative staff, academics, graduate students, and advocacy groups. Randomly selecting stratum members in proportion to their population percentages yielded a comprehensive and representative sample. Table 2 shows the study's sample breakdown, including survey numbers, responses, and completion rates. A high response rate was achieved, with 55 out of 67 academic staff completing the surveys. Similarly, 44 of 58 administrative workers responded. Out of 495 graduate students polled, 381 completed the whole questionnaire. Only 18 of 24 think tanks completed surveys. This breakdown reveals that all participant groups were engaged, proving the study's reliability and robustness. The overall sample response rate was 77.3%.

A mixed-method research study combining quantitative and qualitative data examined the relationship between employee satisfaction, SHCM strategies, self-efficacy as a moderator, and cultural values in Pakistan's HEIs. Stratified random sampling ensured a robust and representative sample, ensuring variation in institutional type, geographic location, staff duties, and demographics. Educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab are diverse, and the research institutes primarily represent them. The research includes the University of Wah, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Government Postgraduate Colleges Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra, COMSATS University Islamabad (various campuses), and the University of Haripur. The study used a mix of public and private institutions, large and small, so including them helped us understand regional dynamics. Academic and administrative staff were preferred when choosing participation based on institutional affiliation and function. Stratified sampling ensured that demographic characteristics, including experience, education, and institutional function, were adequately represented. The study interviewed employees from different backgrounds to better understand employee satisfaction and SHCM performance. A random sample of eligible individuals from each institution was selected to reduce bias and ensure regional applicability.

The study's design excluded control variables from the analysis. This option explored cultural values as moderators, and the direct and indirect connections among SHCM procedures, employee happiness, and self-efficacy, with self-efficacy as a mediator. The study focused on the key components, although control variables

Table 2: Sampling breakdown and response rates

Groups	Total sample size	Response rate	Completed surveys
Academic Professors	67	55	55
Administrative Staff	58	44	44
Graduate Students	495	381	381
Think Tanks	24	18	18
Total	644	498	498

Source: Author's survey

such as organizational size, institutional finance, and departmental differences may have offered insights. Not including control variables makes it difficult to draw broader conclusions, but it helps isolate and understand the most relevant constructs and their interactions in higher education. Future research should include control variables such as institutional size, geographic location, and departmental conflicts to understand SHCM processes and employee contentment better. Control variables help researchers understand SHCM techniques and employee satisfaction.

Self-reported data raise the risk of common method bias; thus, numerous steps were taken to mitigate this risk and ensure the reliability of the results. Secrets and anonymity were maintained throughout data collection to reduce socially desirable responses. Participants gave honest feedback since the poll promised anonymity. The questionnaire was carefully designed to minimize leading questions and clarify measurements. Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test. This test examines whether a single component explains most of the variation in the data. Since no one factor explained most of the difference, this test revealed that common method bias was not a substantial issue. The variance inflation factor (VIF) was used to quantify multicollinearity in regression models. These approaches reduced typical technique bias and ensured accurate findings.

Because of the research model's granularity and the target community's diversity, this study included 498 individuals to yield strong, generalizable findings. Several factors determined the sample size. First, the study targeted professors, academics, graduate students, administrative staff, and other key participants at institutions in Pakistan. Due to this variability, a large sample size was needed to represent the population accurately. Power analysis confirmed the suitability of the sample size. For multiple regression analyses, the minimum sample size was 120 individuals, with a small effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 0.15$), a significance threshold of

0.05, and a power of 0.80. Since this study includes moderation and mediation analyses, the sample size of 498 exceeds this criterion, ensuring significant statistical power to find relevant correlations. A large sample size may alleviate concerns about missing data or about subgroup analyses failing to detect demographic differences. This comprehensive approach ensures statistical validity and reflects Pakistan universities' diverse cultural and organizational contexts.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

The study's mixed-methods approach collects quantitative and qualitative data to examine SHCM procedures.

1. **Qualitative data collection:** Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions. It included 65 interviews with academics, administrative leaders, and think tanks. Open-ended questions were used to assess participants' views on SHCM activities, such as staff development, business culture, and satisfaction with benefits. The researchers used thematic analysis to gain insight from these interviews.

Table 3 offers interview questions that promote detailed responses. These carefully crafted questions explored many facets of Pakistan's institutions and colleges' employee-employer relationship. The poll questions about participants' work experiences, job satisfaction, benefits, and salary, and HRM improvements. Each question seeks qualitative data on SHCM practices and their effects on institutional performance and personnel satisfaction. This strategy ensures a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, leading to comprehensive research.

A thorough qualitative data analysis was done using theme analysis. A six-step procedure, adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006), was used throughout the analytical process to ensure rigor and transparency. First, read the interview transcripts several times to understand the data. Second, to access the data, the study highlighted and named key extracts to develop initial codes. Third, analysis of these codes revealed patterns and initial themes based on similarities and differences. When asked about "employee-employer relationships," several respondents stressed open communication and trust; these comments were grouped under "Workplace Relationships." Step four involved repeatedly checking the themes to ensure they met the study's goals and accurately represented the coded data. The study merged

Table 3: Sample of open-ended interview questions

No.	Questions
1	How would you describe the employee-employer relationship within HEIs in Pakistan?
2	What are the key factors influencing employee satisfaction and retention in Pakistani universities?
3	How do you perceive the benefits and rewards offered to employees in higher education?
4	What strategies do you believe are effective in enhancing human capital management in universities?
5	How can HEIs better support the professional development of their staff?

Source: Author's survey

overlapping themes and removed weak or unnecessary ones. Fifth, finished themes were named to express their meaning concisely. At last, "Benefits and Rewards" evolved from participants' views on wages, incentives, and recognition. The results were documented to support themes and provide context. Table 4 presents the thematic stepwise process adopted in the study for ready reference.

2. **Quantitative data collection:** A total of 498 respondents were surveyed to collect quantitative data. The surveys used five Likert-scale questions (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) to gauge how people felt about SHCM policies, their working conditions, and their benefits. The study tested hypotheses and examined associations among variables using descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis.

Table 5 lists variables and sample questions. The factors include employee satisfaction, employee-employer relationship, benefits and rewards, and strategies for human capital management. Participants may rate each attribute on a 1-5 Likert scale. Benefit Package Satisfaction assesses employee satisfaction with wages and benefits, whereas positive work environment measures workplace satisfaction. A company's performance measures might indicate its efficiency and success. This organized measuring approach allows accurate evaluation of SHCM operations and outcomes.

3.4. Mixed methods approach

The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to examine SHCM practices. It used qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data to show how SHCM improves employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

3.4.1. Moderation and mediation factors

1. **Moderation:** The study examines how cultural values moderate the relationship between SHCM practices and employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction and productivity may depend on cultural norms that shape workers' understanding and response to SHCM initiatives. Cultural values moderated this study. Collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance were used to quantify and operationalize these constructs in Pakistan's higher education setting. These criteria were chosen based on workplace culture, notably in academic and administrative settings. The study used a standardized survey to gauge cultural values at various institutions. Workers' attitudes about workplace uncertainty, hierarchical decision-making, and group objectives were surveyed. The sample includes "Respect for authority and seniority is emphasized in workplace interactions" and "In my workplace, employees are encouraged to prioritize group goals over individual goals." Items were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 strong agreement. The aggregated answers created a cultural values index for moderation analysis. This technique was used to objectively examine how cultural values influenced SHCM and employee satisfaction, revealing how cultural contexts affect company success.

Table 4: Thematic analysis process

Step	Description	Example/outcome
1. Familiarization	Interview data has been transcribed and meticulously evaluated many times for comprehensive understanding.	Significant conclusions, including the crucial role of trust in the employer-employee relationship, were derived from the analyzed interview transcripts.
2. Initial coding	Finding and labeling key data segments that correspond to research aims.	Codes like “trust,” “compensation satisfaction,” and “professional development” were created.
3. Theme identification	Utilizing common attributes and patterns to categorize codes into initial themes.	Themes such as “Workplace Relationships,” “Benefits and Rewards,” and “Professional Growth Opportunities” emerged.
4. theme review	Refining themes for clarity, coherence, and prominence.	Weak or redundant themes were eliminated; overlapping themes like “Supportive Environment” and “Trust” were merged.
5. Definition and naming	Enumerating each theme and assigning it a concise, descriptive title.	Final themes included “Workplace Relationships,” “Fair Compensation,” and “Growth Opportunities.”
6. Validation	Authenticating members’ identities and doing peer debriefings to foster trust.	Participants validated preliminary data, whilst independent researchers analyzed themes.

Table 5: List of variables

Variables	Sample question	Scale	Reference
Employee satisfaction	I am satisfied with the support provided by my institution for professional development.	Employee satisfaction scale	Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997)
Employee-employer relationship	My institution fosters a positive work environment conducive to collaboration and communication.	Employee-Employer Relationship Scale	Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002)
Benefits and rewards	The benefits package offered by my institution meets my needs and expectations.	Preceptor’s perceptions of benefits and rewards (PPBR) scale	Hyrkäs and Shoemaker (2007)
Strategies for human capital management	My institution has clear policies and procedures for employee development and performance evaluation.	Human resources management policies and practices scale (HRMPPS):	Demo et al. (2012)

Source: Author’s survey.

2. Mediation: Self-efficacy was used to assess how SHCM activities, such as staff development and benefit satisfaction, affect employee performance. Self-efficacy, a measure of workers’ confidence in their abilities, may mitigate the associations among SHCM practices, job satisfaction, and institutional success. Understanding how self-efficacy influences employee satisfaction and retention is crucial to SHCM. This stems from Bandura’s (1977) theory. Motivation, resilience, and work performance are all linked to self-efficacy or confidence in one’s ability to complete tasks and achieve goals. According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory, self-efficacy affects how workers solve problems, remain motivated, and use professional development tools. Self-efficacy is vital to SHCM methods because it mediates the relationship between organizational practices and employee outcomes. Effective methods, including training, mentorship, and skill development, enhance workers’ confidence. When employees think they can make a difference at work, they are happier and like going to work. When they believe SHCM will help them achieve their professional objectives, employees are more engaged in the business and less inclined to leave.

Table 6 lists research variables, descriptions, and measurement scales. Workplace perceptions, benefit satisfaction, and professional advancement possibilities are independent variables. Organizational performance measures how effectively and efficiently an institution performs. Culture mediates the association between SHCM practices and employee satisfaction, whereas self-efficacy reflects workers’ confidence in their abilities and influences their attitudes toward SHCM activities. This overview shows how SHCM procedures affect employee outcomes in

complex ways by listing all factors and their contributions to the study.

3.5. Data Techniques

The thematic analysis examined respondents’ views on SHCM processes and employee contentment. Regression analysis was used to identify associations between SHCM procedures and employee happiness. Mediation and moderation studies examined how cultural values and self-efficacy affected these relationships. The study examines SHCM practices in Pakistani universities using a mixed-methods approach, incorporating input from professors, instructors, administrators, students, and think tanks. Studying SHCM practices, employee happiness, and organizational performance may improve SHCM techniques and institutional effectiveness. The study conducts moderation and mediation analyses to understand the relationships among the variables better.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Qualitative Results

The qualitative analysis was organized around five primary themes identified from responses to open-ended questions. The subjects presented provide a thorough understanding of the factors that affect staff satisfaction and the effectiveness of human capital management techniques at universities in Pakistan.

4.1.1. Employee-employer relationship

The participants emphasized that an intricate interplay of institutional rules, socio-political factors, and conventional academic traditions shapes the relationship between employees and employers in educational institutions in Pakistan. Respondents

Table 6: Moderating and mediating variables and their measurement

Variable	Role in study	Description	Item scale	Reference
Cultural values	Moderating Variable	Beliefs and values influencing responses to SHCM practices.	Cultural Values Scale (CVSCALE)	Prasongsukarn (2009)
Self-efficacy	Mediating Variable	Belief in one's ability to succeed and perform effectively.	5-point Likert scale	Sherer and Adams (1983)

Source: Author's survey

highlighted a well-defined organizational framework in which officials have substantial decision-making power, whereas instructors primarily focus on academic and research objectives. Respondents argued for a clear hierarchical structure inside institutions, characterized by well-defined roles and duties for administrators, teachers, and staff. Although tenure-track jobs provide job stability and academic autonomy, non-tenured academics and staff work under more uncertain employment circumstances. Responses indicated significant cooperation and collegiality among faculty members. Scholarly independence is often limited by socio-political considerations, especially regarding sensitive subjects or contentious research. The influence and efficacy of unions and groups representing faculty and staff interests differ, affecting the general nature of the employee-employer relationship. In general, the participants said that a strong connection between employees and employers creates a favorable environment for delivering excellent education and achieving stronger financial and productivity results.

4.1.2. Key factors influencing employee satisfaction

Participants highlighted several crucial elements that significantly impact employee satisfaction and retention in institutions in Pakistan. These aspects were categorized as remuneration and perks, work-life balance, leadership style, and firm culture. Competitive remuneration, comprehensive health insurance coverage, pension schemes, and generous bonuses are essential components of compensation and benefits. A considerable number of participants observed that the sufficiency of remuneration substantially influences both work satisfaction and retention rates. Flexible working hours, telecommuting opportunities, and effective task management contributed to job satisfaction and work-life balance. Many participants highlighted the significance of successfully managing work obligations with personal life. Enhancing professional growth, providing well-defined career trajectories, and offering promotion prospects were crucial factors in sustaining employee motivation and satisfaction. A favorable organizational culture marked by openness, fairness, and transparent communication enhances employee happiness. Critical criteria like ethical standards, employment security, and leadership effectiveness were also recognized.

4.1.3. Benefits and rewards offered to employees

During the discussion, participants highlighted the significance of incentives and rewards in recruiting and retaining skilled individuals in higher education. They underscored the need for implementing thorough and equitable compensation systems that acknowledge and motivate employees' efforts. Respondents identified competitive wages and pay packages, which included performance-based incentives and merit raises, as significant criteria. Comprehensive health insurance and retirement plans

are widely recognized as crucial factors that significantly enhance employee happiness. Providing professional development opportunities, such as financial support for conferences and seminars, was seen as a significant benefit that improves job satisfaction and facilitates career advancement.

4.1.4. Effective strategies for enhancing human capital management

The respondents delineated several approaches to enhancing university human capital management, with a focus on optimizing the capabilities and effectiveness of teachers, staff, and executives. Effective implementation of comprehensive professional development programs for professors and staff was essential. These programs must include workshops, seminars, and certifications that enhance relevant skills and knowledge. Strategic resource allocation to leadership training programs for academic and administrative authorities was highlighted as essential for cultivating a favorable work environment and achieving institutional excellence. Implementing technology to optimize human capital management, such as using HR software for recruiting and performance assessment, was recognized as a successful approach. Policies and programs promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion were crucial for establishing an inclusive atmosphere.

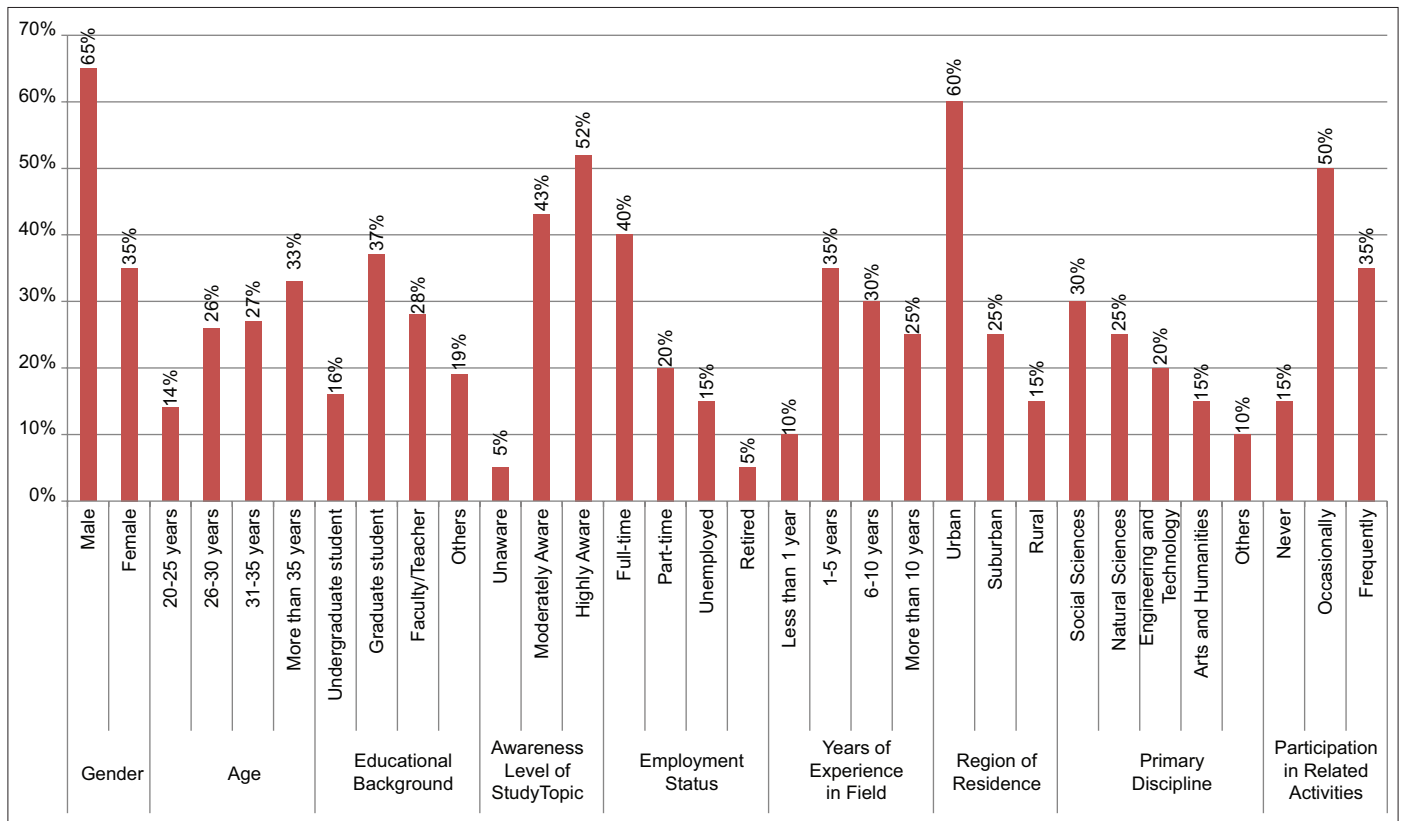
4.1.5. Supporting professional development in educational institutions

The participants provided the following suggestions on how institutions of learning may enhance their support for career growth and cultivate a more involved and efficient staff. Implementing organized training programs that include technical and soft skills was recognized as essential. These programs should be continuous and customized to meet the particular requirements of the teachers and personnel. Implementing a systematic approach to routine performance assessment and feedback was considered crucial to pinpointing areas for improvement and establishing objectives for professional growth. Enabling research and collaboration opportunities with colleagues nationally and globally was a crucial approach to promoting professional development.

4.2. Quantitative Results

Figure 2 shows that 35% of the participants were female and 65% male. The sample is more evenly aged, with 33% over 35 years old. 27% of the sample is 31-35 years old, 26% is 26-30 years old, and 14% is 20-25 years old. Graduate students comprise 37% of the population, followed by instructors and professors (28%). One in six of the sample is an undergraduate, and one in ten is "Others," which include persons with non-academic backgrounds or other forms of education. The educational curriculum emphasizes higher degrees needed to understand complex topics. Due to the

Figure 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents



Source: Author’s survey estimates

significant number of professors and instructors, who undoubtedly have much professional expertise, the data is more complete and credible. Participants’ awareness of the study subject is high, with 52% highly informed and 43% moderately aware. Employment status might reveal a person’s professional engagement and economic situation. 40% of participants work full-time and 20% part-time. The population is 15% unemployed and 5% retired. From actively seeking employment to retirement or being out of the workforce, this job-status distribution encompasses a broad range of economic conditions and life experiences. Experience varied from 1 to 5 years for 35% and 6-10 years for 30%. A quarter of participants had more than 10 years of experience, while 10% had less than a year. The residential region enhances the demographic profile—participant residence breakdown, i.e., metropolitan areas 60%, suburban 25%, and rural 15%. Participants’ principal fields of study or profession were also recorded: 30% social sciences, 25% natural sciences, 20% engineering and technology, and 15% arts and humanities—the other 10% cover other fields. Lastly, the study examined how frequently and how seldom respondents engaged in study-related activities. 35% engaged often, 50% sometimes, and 15% never.

Table 7 summarizes the key factors explored in the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of employee satisfaction in organizations. Employee satisfaction is assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. The average score is 3.70, with a standard deviation of 1.150, indicating moderate to high worker satisfaction. This reliable measure may assess employee pleasure with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.87 and good internal consistency. The KMO score of

0.81 confirms that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis. Independent elements include HR management, employee-employer relations, and benefits and remuneration. These variables have mean scores of 3.80, 3.60, and 3.50, with standard deviations of 1.140, 1.210, and 1.200, respectively. The reliability coefficients for these scales are 0.84-0.86, indicating high internal consistency. This suggests that the scales used to measure these constructs are credible. The KMO values for these variables range from 0.78 to 0.80, suggesting that multivariate analysis would reinforce the study’s results. The study utilizes cultural values as a moderating variable to examine how cultural context influences employee satisfaction and the independent variables. The variable’s mean score is 3.65, and the standard deviation is 1.180. With a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82 and a KMO of 0.76, the construct has strong internal consistency and adequate sampling, supporting the validity and reliability of the moderating effects. Self-efficacy moderates the association between workers’ confidence in their talents and job satisfaction. The self-efficacy measure shows that employees have a mean score of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 1.160. The self-efficacy scale’s 0.88 Cronbach’s alpha reliability indicates its consistency. The sample size is large enough for factor analysis (KMO = 0.82), indicating that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between the independent variables and employee satisfaction.

Table 8 presents the multivariate regression estimates and describes the influence of demographic characteristics on employee satisfaction. Age has a significant relationship with employee satisfaction. This suggests that employee satisfaction

Table 7: Descriptive statistics, reliability, and sampling adequacy of variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO Value
Dependent variable				
Employee satisfaction	3.7	1.15	0.87	0.81
Independent variables				
Employee-employer relationship	3.6	1.21	0.85	0.78
Benefits and rewards	3.5	1.2	0.84	0.79
Strategies for human capital management	3.8	1.14	0.86	0.80
Moderating variable				
Cultural values	3.65	1.18	0.82	0.76
Mediating variable				
Self-efficacy	3.75	1.16	0.88	0.82

Source: Author's survey estimates

Table 8: Regression estimates

Variables	Standardized β -value	t-value	Prob. value
Demographic variables			
Age	0.127	1.852	0.065
Educational background	0.246	2.235	0.028
Awareness level of study topic	0.078	1.115	0.266
Employment status	0.081	1.162	0.245
Years of experience in field	0.172	2.012	0.047
Region of residence	0.138	1.741	0.082
Primary discipline	0.117	1.558	0.121
Participation in related activities	0.093	1.221	0.223
Independent variables			
Employee-employer relationship	0.547	5.976	0.001
Benefits and rewards	0.221	2.243	0.027
Strategies for human capital management	0.262	2.487	0.015
Moderator and mediator variables			
Cultural values (moderator)	0.183	1.98	0.049
Self-efficacy (mediator)	0.32	3.52	0.001
Statistical tests			
R ²	0.752	F-Statistic	9.482
Adjusted R ²	0.657	F-Prob. value	0.001

Source: Author's survey estimates

may vary by age due to age-related characteristics. Its marginal significance suggests a little effect; thus, employee demographics are relevant. This conclusion is consistent with past research on age and work satisfaction; it illustrates that different generations may respond differently to the same job elements (Climek et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2023). Years of experience in the field substantially affect employee satisfaction. This suggests that job happiness is strongly influenced by years of experience. This supports prior research showing that job satisfaction increases with experience due to greater job understanding and skill mastery (Nikolova et al., 2023; Fateh et al., 2024). A significant correlation exists between educational background and employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.246$, $P = 0.028$). This suggests a favorable relationship between education and job happiness. Previous studies have shown that education affects work satisfaction and that more educated people may be better suited to their occupations and expectations (Fütterer et al., 2023; Molwitz et al., 2023). The results show that age, experience, and education affect employee happiness,

whereas subject expertise has minimal effect. This understanding contributes to the work happiness discourse and supports earlier studies on how personal attributes affect workers' perceptions and experiences (Elshaer et al., 2023; Lee and Kim, 2023).

The employee-employer relationship positively impacts employee satisfaction. This study found that employer-employee relationships foster job satisfaction. An effective workplace requires helpful and engaged colleagues. According to organizational behavior theory, management's ability to build positive employee relationships affects morale and job satisfaction (Bahadır et al., 2024). Employees are happier when they have positive opinions of their superiors and colleagues and maintain helpful, respectful relationships. This supports social exchange theory, which posits that supportive ties and positive encounters enhance equality and reciprocity, thereby boosting job satisfaction (Bhinekawati and Yunita, 2024). Prior studies have indicated that relational dynamics are vital in the workplace, supporting the employee-employer connection (Boukef et al., 2024; Al Doghan and Zakariya, 2023). Imam et al. (2023) found that employees who feel supported by their superiors perform more and are happier. Connected individuals communicate better, trust more, and feel more at home at work. Excellent outcomes are essential for employee happiness and engagement. This research supports the premise that strong, supportive employer-worker relationships improve job satisfaction and well-being (Adam Perry and Nicholson, 2025). Further, it shows that ideal employee-employer relationships are advantageous, organizations should prioritize them. Consistent praise, honest communication, and constructive criticism may assist. Employees feel valued and supported, which may boost job satisfaction and retention (Le et al., 2023). The study's practical applications for human resource management include enhancing relationship dynamics to increase employee satisfaction and organizational culture.

The benefits and rewards variable positively affects employee satisfaction, indicating the extent to which wages and perks influence work satisfaction. For workers to feel valued and compensated fairly, benefits must be adequate and equitable. Equity theory suggests that workers assess their job satisfaction by comparing their remuneration to that of similar peers and the effort they put in (Adriaans et al., 2023). Vivian and Amah (2024) showed that complete benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and performance bonuses, make workers happier and more loyal. Perks that meet workers' financial and health needs indicate how much the company regards them. This confirmed that perks and rewards boosted employee pleasure, indicating that fair and competitive pay systems improve job satisfaction (Balkin and Werner, 2023). Offering fair and enticing rewards may enhance employee satisfaction, retention, and talent acquisition (Trivedi et al., 2024).

Strategies for human capital management positively impact employee satisfaction. These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of strategic management in improving workplace happiness. Effective human resource management involves aligning practices with business goals and promoting employee growth. Ravina-Ripoll and Robina-Ramírez (2023) found that well-planned

HR policies lead to happier, more productive workers. These techniques include aligning HR procedures with corporate objectives, supporting career advancement, and fostering professional development. Strategic HR management improves employee satisfaction, supporting prior studies on HRM's role in workplace happiness. Wright and McMahan (1992) found that devoted, happy workers work for companies that care about their employees' progress and satisfaction. This suggests prioritizing comprehensive human capital management techniques to improve employee satisfaction and organizational success (Ak Gunduz et al., 2023). HR Strategies for human capital management affect employee happiness; thus, aligning them with company goals is vital. An engaging and happy work environment may be created by planning and implementing programs that help people develop professionally, progress in their careers, and align with the company's goals (Salvadorinho and Teixeira, 2023).

The moderation result found that cultural values influence the employer-employee relationship and employee satisfaction. This shows that cultural norms and values affect employee-employer relationships and job happiness, not vice versa. This moderating effect reveals that cultural characteristics strongly influence how workers perceive and respond to employers. Cultural traits such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance influence workplace interactions (Carter et al., 2024). Positive employer-worker relationships may boost job satisfaction in collectivistic cultures that value harmony and relationships. The employee-employer relationship may affect happiness in increasingly individualistic cultures that emphasize personal achievements and autonomy. This shows how vital it is for firms to adapt their management practices across cultures to enhance employee satisfaction (Ramirez-Lozano et al., 2023). Moderation and mediation analyses demonstrate that self-efficacy mediates the effects of employee-employer interaction, perks and incentives, and human capital management techniques on employee happiness. Table 9 presents Harman's single-factor and multicollinearity analyses for ready reference.

Table 10 shows the moderation analysis for ready reference. There is a significant moderating effect on the interaction between cultural values and employee-employer relationships. This suggests that cultural values moderate the link between employee happiness and employer-employee interactions. Employee happiness is increased by the employee-employer connection in culturally significant circumstances. This supports prior studies showing that cultural factors may enhance or dampen the effects of management techniques on employee outcomes, depending on organizational and cultural norms (Rockstuhl et al., 2023; Adamovic, 2023a). Similarly, the interaction term between benefits and rewards and cultural values yields a positive relationship. This found that benefits and rewards affect employee satisfaction and cultural values. In culturally strong businesses, bonuses and awards boost employee happiness. Cultural context is crucial for designing and implementing incentive systems.

The interaction term between strategies for human capital management and cultural values significantly moderates the relationship. According to the study, cultural values moderate the

Table 9: Results of harman's single-factor test and variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis

Test	Variable/factor	Value (%)
Harman's single-actor test	Total variance explained by first factor	42
	Total variance explained by all factors	72
Variance inflation factor (VIF)	Employee-employer relationship	3.5
	Benefits and rewards	2.8
	SHCM strategies	4.1
	Self-efficacy	3.2
	Cultural values	3.0

Table 10: Moderation analysis

Variables	β -value	t-value	Prob. value
Employee-employer relationship \times cultural values	0.202	2.751	0.007
Benefits and rewards \times cultural values	0.187	2.442	0.015
Strategies for human capital management \times cultural values	0.165	2.039	0.042

Source: Author's survey estimates

relationship between HRM techniques and employee satisfaction. Culturally ingrained human capital management methods boost employee happiness. The cultural context may impact how successfully human capital strategies operate. Table 11 shows the mediation analysis between the variables.

Self-efficacy successfully explains the association between the quality of the employee-employer relationship and employee satisfaction. Employee confidence and perceived competence influence satisfaction outcomes, and increased self-efficacy boosts satisfaction in the employee-employer relationship. Self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between benefits and rewards and employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.321$, t -value = 3.488). High-self-efficacy employees are more likely to be satisfied with their incentives, supporting the premise that self-efficacy boosts employee satisfaction. Mediation between strategies for human capital management and employee satisfaction is most significant. This shows that self-efficacy mediates and amplifies the relationship between employee happiness and human capital management. High-self-efficacy workers might benefit from human capital management practices that enhance morale and productivity (Ocak et al., 2024). Table 11 further illustrates the Sobel test statistic, P-values, and indirect effects of self-efficacy, the mediating variable, on employee satisfaction. In all cases, self-efficacy mediates the effects of SHCM approaches on employee happiness, and the effects are statistically significant. A results matrix displays the combined data effect in Table 12.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to SHCM by examining how cultural values influence satisfaction and self-efficacy among higher education staff. The findings apply these impulses to academic institutions that operate differently from the private and corporate organizations studied before. It confirms Bandura's theory and illustrates how self-efficacy mediates; it is particularly significant in organizations that require engaged and adaptable staff (Hassan

Table 11: Mediation analysis

Variables	β value	S.E	t- value	Prob. value	Indirect effect	Sobel test statistic (Z)	Sobel test prob.value
Employee-employer Relationship→Self-Efficacy→Employee Satisfaction	0.299	0.050	3.22	0.001	0.163	3.23	0.001
Benefits and Rewards→Self-Efficacy→Employee Satisfaction	0.321	0.045	3.488	0.001	0.161	3.42	0.000
Strategies for Human Capital Management→Self-Efficacy→Employee Satisfaction	0.34	0.040	3.71	0.000	0.173	3.85	0.000

Source: Author's survey estimates

Table 12: Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings

Key variables	Qualitative insights	Quantitative results
Employee-employer relationship	The participants highlighted the importance of trust and respect in creating a satisfying environment.	Strong positive impact on satisfaction ($\beta=0.547$, $P=0.001$).
Benefits and rewards	Participants emphasized the need for precise and equal incentive mechanisms.	Significant positive association with satisfaction ($\beta=0.221$, $P=0.027$).
Strategies for human capital management (SHCM)	Participants emphasized the need for tailored strategies to address employee needs and promote their advancement.	Positive impact on satisfaction ($\beta=0.262$, $P=0.015$).
Self-efficacy (Mediator)	Participants indicated that employees with positive self-perception performed better and were happier.	Significant mediation effects on all explanatory variables (β range: 0.299-0.340).
Cultural values (moderator)	Several participants linked cultural norms to employee engagement and adaptability.	Moderating effect observed between employee-employer interaction and satisfaction ($\beta=0.183$, $P=0.049$).

et al., 2024). Cultural theory has been criticized for failing to adapt to multicultural, ever-changing situations. This study addresses that gap by revealing how cultural values influence employee pleasure. The findings show that cultural congruence between workers' attitudes and company actions affects employee contentment beyond institutional restrictions (Iqbal and Parray, 2024). Cultural theory is applied to numerous institutional settings in this research, which is relevant in Pakistan's HEIs. HRM studies frequently ignore university SHCM, but this research illuminates it. The study emphasizes personalized employee-employer interactions and remuneration methods to improve scholarly knowledge of employee satisfaction. This framework offers a strong foundation for future investigations of the SHCM method in related sectors and can be applied across diverse locations and institutions.

5.2. Practical Implications

The findings illustrate how crucial cultural fit and self-efficacy are in HR practices that enhance employee satisfaction. Human resource managers should prioritize self-esteem-boosting and advancement-promoting training. Businesses can also include employees in decision-making to promote morale and mission commitment. Higher education officials should prioritize inclusive HR management solutions that include employee culture. For instance, rewards and incentives should be adjusted to cultural preferences to treat employees with diverse backgrounds fairly (Adamovic, 2023b). Clear career paths, health programs, and flexible work hours make employees happier and more loyal (Scheide Miller and Giblin, 2024). These practical recommendations are crucial for achieving organizational objectives and motivating workers at low-resource HEIs.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1. Limitations of the Study

Despite its benefits, this study has some limitations. The study's main limitation is that its findings may not generalize beyond

Pakistan's HEIs; even if the area's cultural and socioeconomic dynamics illuminate critical challenges, they may not generalize to other countries or industries. Cross-sectional data make it harder to determine causality, as relationships may change over time or with organizational development. Variable incorporation is another limitation. While the study covered important categories such as self-efficacy and cultural values, omitting other potentially relevant control variables, including organizational size, leadership styles, and external economic conditions, may have affected the results. Another impediment is that employee performance and turnover rates may have offered a fuller picture of SHCM's effects on the workforce. However, this study examines employee happiness.

6.2. Future Research Directions

Future research should examine universities across several cultural and economic settings, using a multi-regional approach to address these issues. Comparative research between the academic and corporate sectors, or between developed and emerging countries, may help explain the applicability of the findings. Longitudinal research designs that examine the dynamic relationships between variables over time are recommended to yield more precise causal estimates. Future studies should incorporate additional control variables to account for external factors affecting employee satisfaction. Organizational leadership styles, employee engagement initiatives, and macroeconomic conditions might help clarify and validate the results. Researchers should consider organizational performance, personnel retention, and innovation potential to better understand SHCM's impacts. Advanced statistical approaches, such as hierarchical modeling, may help explain mediation and moderation effects. These methods may uncover complex relationships among variables.

7. CONCLUSION

The study examined how SHCM affects employee happiness in Pakistani HEIs, utilizing cultural values as a moderator and self-efficacy as a mediator. The findings show that SHCM procedures

increase employee happiness, and self-efficacy mediates this relationship. Cultural values attenuated these associations, suggesting that local HRM approaches may be more effective in making workers happy. The results advance SHCM theory by applying cultural value and human capital theories to higher education. They note that HRM strategies that account for cultural differences and promote human capital development have happier workers. This supports and extends HRM's need for human and organizational factors. For higher education HR managers and policymakers, the study provides practical advice. It emphasizes culturally sensitive HRM practices, including social and personal factors affecting employee engagement, happiness, and skill development. The study suggests that HR practices should foster self-efficacy to increase employee satisfaction and productivity. This finding affects Pakistan's HRM, as cultural values are critical. The study emphasizes SHCM strategies like cultural awareness and staff development. HRM approaches that align with cultural values and concentrate on self-efficacy may improve employee satisfaction and corporate success. Future research may examine how these findings apply across different businesses and locations better to understand SHCM's role in long-term worker contentment.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research and Graduate Studies at King Khalid University for funding this work through a Large Research Group Project under Grant Number RGP 2/23/47.

REFERENCES

- Abellán-Sevilla, A.J., Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, M. (2023), Smart human resource analytics for happiness management. *Journal of Management Development*, 42(6), 514-525.
- Adam Perry, J., Nicholson, L. (2025), 'It's a reward for good performance': Exploring the role of employer-employee relationships in Canada's two-step economic immigration system. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 51(5), 1431-1447.
- Adamovic, M. (2023a), Organizational justice research: A review, synthesis, and research Agenda. *European Management Review*, 20(4), 762-782.
- Adamovic, M. (2023b), The cultural influence on employees' preferences for reward allocation rules: A two-wave survey study in 28 countries. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 33(4), 889-921.
- Adriaans, J., Sauer, C., Moya, C. (2023), Pay justice and pay satisfaction: The influence of reciprocity, social comparisons, and standard of living. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 86(1), 95-106.
- Aggarwal, P., Agarwala, T. (2023), Relationship of green human resource management with environmental performance: Mediating effect of green organizational culture. *Benchmarking an International Journal*, 30(7), 2351-2376.
- Ahmad, M.F., Salamuddin, N., Surat, S., Safwan, N.S.Z., Latif, R.A., Basar, A., Azemi, M.A. (2023), Linking human resources management practices and organizational commitment: The mediating role of employability. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 11(2), e636.
- Akgunduz, Y., Bardakoglu, O., Kizilcalioglu, G. (2023), Happiness, job stress, job dedication and perceived organizational support: A mediating model. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 6(2), 654-673.
- Al Doghan, M.A., Zakariya, A. (2023), Human resource economics: Impact of social and economic factors on employer-employee relationship. *International Journal of Economics and Finance Studies*, 15(1), 490-509.
- Alfawaire, F., Atan, T. (2021), The effect of strategic human resource and knowledge management on sustainable competitive advantages at Jordanian universities: The mediating role of organizational innovation. *Sustainability*, 13(15), 8445.
- Bahadır, F., Yeşiltaş, M., Sesen, H., Olaleye, B.R. (2024), The relation between perceived organizational support and employee satisfaction: The role of relational psychological contract and reciprocity ideology. *Kybernetes*, 53(1), 102-122.
- Balkin, D.B., Werner, S. (2023), Theorizing the relationship between discretionary employee benefits and individual performance. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(1), 100901.
- Bandura, A. (1977), Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. Vol. 604. United States: Freeman.
- Becker, G.S. (2009), *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. United States: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bhinekawati, R., Yunita, P. (2024), The influence of reciprocity and trust on satisfaction of members of sharia cooperatives in Indonesia: A social capital perspective. *International Journal of Business Studies*, 8(2), 110-128.
- Binghay, V.C. (2022), Total rewards in various Philippine organizations: Impact on employees' pay, benefits, work-life balance, career development, and performance recognition. *Philippine Journal of Labor and Industrial Relations*, 39, 1-51.
- Boukef, N., Charki, M.H., Cheikh-Ammar, M. (2024), Bridging the gap between work-and nonwork-related knowledge contributions on enterprise social media: The role of the employee-employer relationship. *Information Systems Journal*, 34(5), 1538-1578.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006), Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Cachón-Rodríguez, G., Blanco-González, A., Prado-Román, C., Del-Castillo-Feito, C. (2022), How sustainable human resources management helps in the evaluation and planning of employee loyalty and retention: Can social capital make a difference? *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 95, 102171.
- Carter, K.M., Hetrick, A.L., Chen, M., Humphrey, S.E., Morgeson, F.P., Hoffman, B.J. (2024), How culture shapes the influence of work design characteristics: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management*, 50(1), 122-157.
- Climek, M., Henry, R., Jeong, S. (2024), Integrative literature review on employee turnover antecedents across different generations: Commonalities and uniqueness. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 48(1/2), 112-132.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J.A.M., Kessler, I. (2002), Exploring reciprocity through the lens of the psychological contract: Employee and employer perspectives. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 11(1), 69-86.
- Demo, G., Neiva, E.R., Nunes, I., Rozzett, K. (2012), Human resources management policies and practices scale (HRMPPS): Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. *BAR-Brazilian Administration Review*, 9(4), 395-420.
- Douglas, M. (2013), *In the Active Voice* (Routledge Revivals). London: Routledge.
- Dwikat, S.Y., Arshad, D., Mohd Shariff, M.N. (2023), Effect of competent human capital, strategic flexibility and turbulent environment on sustainable performance of SMEs in manufacturing industries in

- palestine. *Sustainability*, 15(6), 4781.
- Elshaer, A.M., Marzouk, A.M., Khalifa, G.S. (2023), Antecedents of employees' perception and attitude to risks: The experience of Egyptian tourism and hospitality industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism*, 24(3), 330-358.
- Farooq, R., Tripathi, N. (2024), Moderating role of power distance in the relationship between leader-leader exchange (LLX) and knowledge sharing: Is feedback-seeking behavior a missing link? *VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, 54(1), 129-156.
- Fateh, A., Aslam, M.Z., Shahzad, F. (2024), Does personal mastery lead to creativity for complex jobs: A moderated mediation model. *Kybernetes*, 53(11), 4840-4862.
- Fawehinmi, O., Yusliza, M.Y., Tanveer, M.I., Abdullahi, M.S. (2024), Influence of green human resource management on employee green behavior: The sequential mediating effect of perceived behavioral control and attitude toward corporate environmental policy. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 31(3), 2514-2536.
- Fitri, S. (2024), Evaluation of compensation policies and their impact on employee retention in the food industry. *Involvement International Journal of Business*, 1(1), 42-59.
- Fütterer, T., Van Waveren, L., Hübner, N., Fischer, C., Sälzer, C. (2023), I can't get no (job) satisfaction? Differences in teachers' job satisfaction from a career pathways perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 121, 103942.
- Geethanjali, N., Ashifa, K.M., Raina, A., Patil, J., Byloppilly, R., Rajest, S.S. (2024), Application of strategic human resource management models for organizational performance. In: *Data-Driven Decision Making for Long-Term Business Success*. United States: IGI Global. p1-19.
- Ghlichlee, B., Goodarzi, A. (2023), Strategic human resource practices and new product development performance: The mediating role of intellectual capital. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 24(3), 730-756.
- Hamouche, S. (2023), Human resource management and the COVID-19 crisis: Implications, challenges, opportunities, and future organizational directions. *Journal of Management Organization*, 29(5), 799-814.
- Haque, S.M.S. (2023), Building lasting bonds: Exploring effective employee retention techniques in contemporary organizations. *European Journal of Human Resource Management Studies*, 7(1), 130-149.
- Hassan, R.S., Amin, H.M., Ghoneim, H. (2024), Decent work and innovative work behavior of academic staff in higher education institutions: The mediating role of work engagement and job self-efficacy. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1-19.
- Hazeen Fathima, M., Umarani, C. (2023), Fairness in human resource management practices and engineers' intention to stay in Indian construction firms. *Employee Relations the International Journal*, 45(1), 156-171.
- Hofstede, G. (1984), *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Vol. 5. London: Sage.
- Hyrkäs, K., Shoemaker, M. (2007), Changes in the preceptor role: Revisiting preceptors' perceptions of benefits, rewards, support, and commitment to the role. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60(5), 513-524.
- Imam, H., Sahi, A., Farasat, M. (2023), The roles of supervisor support, employee engagement and internal communication in performance: A social exchange perspective. *Corporate Communications an International Journal*, 28(3), 489-505.
- Iqbal, J., Parray, Z.A. (2024), Striking the balance: Unraveling the influence of organizational culture on organization citizenship behavior with corporate social responsibility as the bridge. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 74, 2091-2112.
- Jahmani, A., Jawabreh, O., Fahmawee, E.A.A.L., Almasarweh, M., Ali, B.J. (2023), The impact of employee management on organizational performance in Dubai's five-star hotel sector. *Journal of Statistics Applications Probability*, 12(2), 395-404.
- Kaur, M., Gandolfi, F. (2023), Artificial intelligence in human resource management-challenges and future research recommendations. *Revista de Management Comparat International*, 24(3), 382-393.
- Kumari, J., Kumar, J. (2023), Influence of motivation on teachers' job performance. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 158.
- Le, H., Lee, J., Nielsen, I., Nguyen, T.L.A. (2023), Turnover intentions: The roles of job satisfaction and family support. *Personnel Review*, 52(9), 2209-2228.
- Lee, M., Kim, B. (2023), Effect of employee experience on organizational commitment: Case of South Korea. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(7), 521.
- Macdonald, S., MacIntyre, P. (1997), The generic job satisfaction scale: Scale development and its correlates. *Employee Assistance Quarterly*, 13(2), 1-16.
- Malik, A., Nguyen, M., Budhwar, P., Chowdhury, S., Gugnani, R. (2024), Leveraging high-performance HRM practices and knowledge sharing for managing technological and social change in emerging market healthcare providers. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 205, 123463.
- Malik, S., Maqbool, M.A., Ghani, A. (2023), College teachers' satisfaction regarding human resource management practices in private sector colleges. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 926-935.
- Martinez-Falcó, J., Sánchez-García, E., Marco-Lajara, B., Millán-Tudela, L.A. (2024), Enhancing employee wellbeing and happiness management in the wine industry: Unveiling the role of green human resource management. *BMC Psychology*, 12(1), 203.
- Molwitz, I., Kemper, C., Stahlmann, K., Oechtering, T.H., Sieren, M.M., Afat, S., Gerwing, M., Bucher, A.M., Storz, C., Langenbach, M.C., Reim, M., Lotz, J., Zagrosek-Regitz, V., Can, E., Köhler, D., Yamamura, J., Adam, G., Hamm, B., Keller, S. (2023), Work expectations, their fulfillment, and exhaustion among radiologists of all career levels: What can be learned from the example of Germany. *European Radiology*, 33(8), 5664-5674.
- Nguyen, H.M., Nguyen, L.V. (2023), Employer attractiveness, employee engagement and employee performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 72(10), 2859-2881.
- Nguyen, N.T.H. (2023), Are millennials different? A time-lag study of federal millennial and generation x employees' affective commitment. *Public Personnel Management*, 52(2), 143-169.
- Nikolova, I., Vander Elst, T., De Jong, S.B., Baillien, E., De Witte, H. (2023), Can task changes affect job satisfaction through qualitative job insecurity and skill development? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 32(4), 520-537.
- Nyathi, M., Kekwaletswe, R. (2024), Electronic human resource management (e-HRM) configuration for organizational success: Inclusion of employee outcomes as contextual variables. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness People and Performance*, 11(1), 196-212.
- Ocak, M., Arıkan, Ö.U., Aslan, H. (2024), The mediating role of self-efficacy in the impact of schools' rewarding practices on teachers' job performance. *International Journal of Business Performance Management*, 25(3), 392-409.
- Prasongsukarn, K. (2009), Validating the cultural value scale (CVSCALE): A case study of Thailand. *ABAC Journal*, 29(2), 1-13.
- Ramirez-Lozano, J., Peñafior-Guerra, R., Sanagustin-Fons, V. (2023), Leadership, communication, and job satisfaction for employee engagement and sustainability of family businesses in Latin America.

Administrative Sciences, 13(6), 137.

- Ravina-Ripoll, R., Robina-Ramírez, R. (2023), Are rural accommodation employees able to aspire to transcendent happiness in their work? An exploratory model. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-13.
- Ray, C., Essman, S., Nyberg, A.J., Ployhart, R.E., Hale, D. (2023), Human capital resources: Reviewing the first decade and establishing a foundation for future research. *Journal of Management*, 49(1), 280-324.
- Rockstuhl, T., Wu, D., Dulebohn, J.H., Liao, C., Hoch, J.E. (2023), Cultural congruence or compensation? A meta-analytic test of transformational and transactional leadership effects across cultures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 54(3), 476-504.
- Sadikin, A., Yodiansyah, H., Budiasih, Y., Sugiarti, S., Kusnadi, I.H. (2023), Adaptive human resource management in confrontation of globalization's challenges. *Jurnal Ekonomi*, 12(02), 1761-1767.
- Salvadorinho, J., Teixeira, L. (2023), Happy and engaged workforce in industry 4.0: A new concept of digital tool for HR based on theoretical and practical trends. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2781.
- Scheide Miller, C., Giblin, J. (2024), Improving job satisfaction and belonging through flexible work and leadership cohorts. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 26(1), 20-47.
- Sharif, S., Malik, S.A., Arooj, N., Albadry, O.M. (2024), Human resource management (HRM) practices and organizational commitment in higher educational institution (HEI): A mediating role for work engagement. *Global Knowledge Memory and Communication*. doi: 10.1108/GKMC-11-2023-0456
- Sherer, M., Adams, C.H. (1983), Construct validation of the self-efficacy scale. *Psychological Reports*, 53(3), 899-902.
- Sypniewska, B., Baran, M., Kłos, M. (2023), Work engagement and employee satisfaction in the practice of sustainable human resource management - based on the study of polish employees. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 19(3), 1069-1100.
- Trivedi, S.K., Srivastava, J., Patra, P., Singh, S., Jena, D. (2024), Recognize and thrive: Predicting employees' satisfaction towards fairness in reward and recognition system using explainable machine learning and text mining. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. doi: 10.1108/GKMC-11-2023-0416
- Van Tam, N. (2024), Impact of self-efficacy on construction labor productivity: The mediating role of work motivation. *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*. doi: 10.1108/ECAM-11-2023-1114
- Vivian, C.N., Amah, E. (2024), The impact of employer provided benefits on job satisfaction in public construction sector in rivers State, Nigeria. *Research Journal of Management Practice*, 4(4), 32-48.
- Waheed, A., Zhang, Q. (2022), Effect of CSR and ethical practices on sustainable competitive performance: A case of emerging markets from stakeholder theory perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 175(4), 837-855.
- Wright, P.M., McMahan, G.C. (1992), Theoretical perspectives for strategic human resource management. *Journal of management*, 18(2), 295-320.
- Xu, X., Oancea, A., Rose, H. (2021), The impacts of incentives for international publications on research cultures in Chinese humanities and social sciences. *Minerva*, 59(4), 469-492.
- Yesufu, L., Alajlani, S. (2024), Investigating the effects of performance and compensation management on the psychological contract in higher education. In: Awwad, B., editors. *The AI Revolution: Driving Business Innovation and Research*. Studies in Systems, Decision and Control. Vol. 525. Cham: Springer.