

# Beyond Compliance: Harnessing HRM to Champion Decent Work and Economic Growth in Pakistan

Syed Usman Shahid<sup>1</sup>, Arfan Ahmed<sup>2</sup>, Taha Shabbir<sup>3</sup> and Syed Arif Hussain<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

The aim of this research paper was to examine the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in promoting decent work and contributing towards economic growth in Pakistan. Rather than a compliance-based approach, the study investigated how strategic human resource management efforts impacted on employee well-being, productivity and innovation that influenced organizational performance as well as national economic indicators. Mixed methods referred to a strategy employed for this study, which involved both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews conducted among various HR practitioners and employees across different industries within the country. On progressive human resources strategies such as equitable pay, skills training and development and voice at work, there is a positive relationship with better employment conditions improved job satisfaction level, worker's commitment. To add salt to injury enterprises who have all rounded human resource management system record high levels of labor productivity decreased rate of employee turnover as well as increased creativity which contributes to economic growth. Findings from this study illustrates how it is important to change the approach of HRM in Pakistan from merely maintaining compliance with laws to being proactive driver of good jobs and sustainable economy.

**Keywords:** organizational performance, Human Resource Management, economic growth, skills training

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<sup>1-3</sup> Hamdard University Karachi – Pakistan

<sup>4</sup> University of Karachi, Karachi – Pakistan

## **Introduction**

**T**he country of Pakistan, a developing nation with a large and young labor population, faces tremendous challenges to achieving decent jobs and maintaining economic growth. Despite the availability of labor laws and international standards, their enforcement often remains poor. For Human Resource Management (HRM), it can go beyond just law completion and be an impetus to promoting good working conditions, employee welfare and overall organizational performance. Against this background, the present research paper seeks to explore whether strategic human resource management approaches may contribute towards decent work opportunities and economic development in Pakistan.

There are major obstacles that Pakistan has to overcome in order to have better working conditions as well as achieve sustainable economic progress. A country that is marked by a high population growth rate, youthful population bulge and abundant human resources is Pakistan. Even though there is a framework consisting of international norms and labor regulations; these legal frameworks face implementation challenges that lead to its ineffectiveness. As a result of this implementation gap, a sizeable segment of the labor force is thus exposed to risks such as exploitation, unsafe work environment or limited prospects for upward mobility.

In this intricate environment the field of human resource management (HRM) has been indicated as one possible linchpin. The HRM should extend beyond compliance with rules only so as influence positive change at all levels. Strategic human resource management programs can enhance workplace safety for employees besides improving their lifestyles while still making an organization more productive in terms of skills enhancement as well as other aspects like creativity leading improved overall organizational performance. There is therefore cascading effect when these factors are nurtured upwards because they significantly add up on indicators for national development both economic wise and holistic.

This research aims at finding out how strategic human resource management practices could drive decent work opportunities along with economic growth within Pakistan context? This study aims at investigating the complex relationships between progressive HRM strategies like fair remuneration systems, effective employee training schemes among others which promote worker satisfaction and

engagement, ultimately bolstering success of the company. This research is intended to help policy makers, organization leaders and HRM professionals who are inclined towards pro-poor human resource management by providing practical insights into both the benefits and challenges that accompany the implementation of effective HRM strategies.

Moreover, this research's objective is to make a contribution to the ongoing debate on the role of Human Resource Management in developing countries. By focusing solely on Pakistan, it hopes to reveal unique difficulties and opportunities provided by social economic and cultural context of this nation. To sum up everything, through this study, we aspire to provide organizations and politicians with a guideline which can be used for initiating a virtuous circle where achieving decent employment leads to economic development thereby making a richer future for everyone possible in an equitable manner.

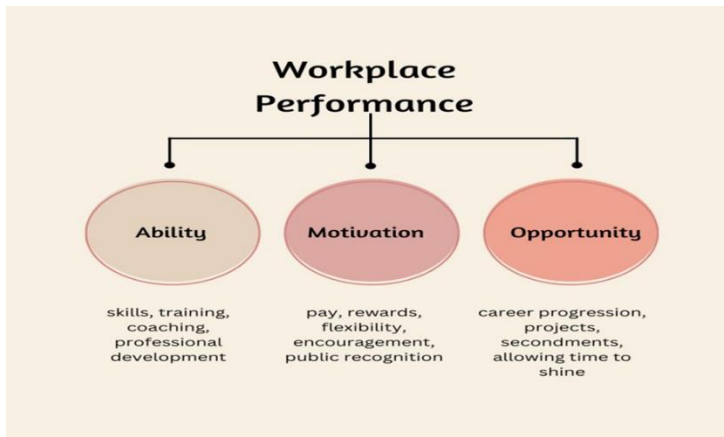
#### ❖ **Research Significance**

According to the results of this study, there are important implications for a variety of actors in Pakistan. The findings will be used to guide the establishment and modification of labor laws and regulations that foster decent work and create conducive environment for economic growth. This study is expected to provide insights on how strategic human resource management can be employed to enhance organizational performance, attract and retain talents, as well as stimulate innovative thinking. In addition, it stresses the importance of harmonizing HRM strategies with organizational goals as well as national development objectives while at the same time offering recommendations on best practices in HRM. By demonstrating the link between human resource management practices and employee welfare, this research will prepare employees who will demand for their rights from employers who give priority to fair employment. Such findings will add knowledge on human resource management in developing countries like Pakistan hence; enriching scientific literature. It would also set ground for other future research activities and interventions.

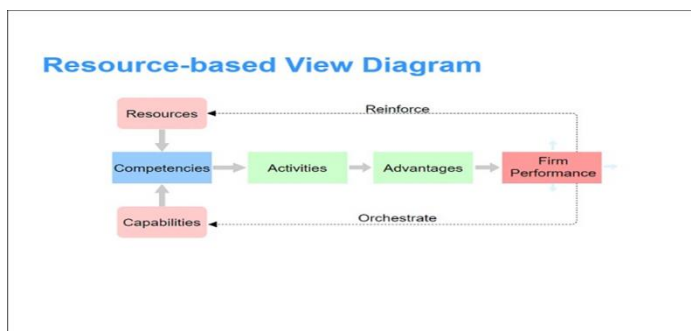
### **Theoretical Framework**

Some central theories underpin this research and provide the base for understanding how human resource management practices can influence work that is decent as well as economic growth.

**Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Theory:** Employee performance according to this theory relies on a combination of three factors: ability, motivation, and opportunity. HRM practices can affect all these factors. For example, training programs improve the ability of employees, fair compensation and recognition systems boost their motivation while employee empowerment initiatives create opportunities for participation and growth.



**Resource-Based View (RBV) of the Firm:** According to this theory, sustainable competitive advantage arises from unique resources that are difficult to imitate or substitute for. Human resources especially skilled and motivated workforce is considered a valuable resource which leads to superior performance leading to economic growth. Developing and nurturing this resource is an essential role of HRM practices.



**Decent Work Framework:** Four-pillars framework developed by ILO – International Labor Organization consists of employment creation; rights at work;

social protection; social dialogue. It will contribute in various ways within each pillar where HRM can do job creation, fair treatment or safe working conditions issues,, staff benefits or security benefits,, employee involvement in corporate governance process.



## Review of the Literature

An extensive amount of research has shown that there is a connection between the strategies of human resource management and the positive results that an organization achieves. Employee participation in decision-making, fair compensation, safe and healthy working environment, opportunities for skill development are some examples of the characteristics that have been linked to increased employee engagement, productivity and innovation. Some other aspects include a safe and healthy working environment in the workplace. Additionally, these factors contribute to organizations' success leading to growth in a country's economy.

The academic literature has lots of studies done on HRM practices, good employment and sustainability of economic development as well. According to Guest (1997), a strategic human resource management approach which includes policies consistent with the objectives and values of the firm can improve business performance. Selective recruiting; intensive training; performance-based rewards; employee empowerment are characteristics associated with high-performance work systems (Boselie et al., 2005). A high-performance work system (HWPS) improves organizational outputs according to Boselie et al., 2005). This also supports what was stated above. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has always espoused fair wage rates, secure occupational conditions as well as social protection/assistance and skills acquisition programs as vital elements constituting decent work (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2019). Such messages have been disseminated through the prism of decent labour framework too. Appelbaum et al.'s(2000) study revealed a positive correlation between progressive human

resource management practices and employee well-being job satisfaction engagement levels . It proves that this association is helpful. For instance, Batt & Colvin's (2011) research is highly significant because it demonstrated how much impact does employee voice and involvement into business operations could bear. Particularly it pertains to creativity supportiveness and adaptability in particular.

Consequently, human resource management should be used not only for improving working conditions or employees' well-being but also as an instrument of economic growth characterized by more productivity and innovation, organizational effectiveness. In view of this fact, the management should be in a position to improve employees' working conditions. Apparently, the findings suggest that human resource management can play vital role in these areas.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. A quantitative survey was conducted among employees across different categories of industries in Pakistan, collecting data on their views of the HRM practices, satisfaction with jobs as well as engagement. In addition to this, qualitative interviews were undertaken among human resource practitioners to acquire more insight into HRM policies and challenges.

### **❖ Research Design**

The study employed a mixed-methods research design which combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a full understanding of the relationship between HRM practices, decent work and economic growth in Pakistan. The quantitative component enabled statistical analysis of large-scale-data while the qualitative component generated in-depth information about people's experiences and perceptions within organizations.

### **❖ Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to collect quantitative data from employees working across different sectors in Pakistan, a structured questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire contained items such as:

- HRM Practices: Questions were asked regarding whether or not companies adhered to fair compensation, opportunities for training and development, employee participation schemes and safe working conditions.
- Decent Work Indicators: Items sought employees' views on issues affecting job security, fair treatment at work place, social protection against hazards at workplace and possibilities for personal growth.

- Economic Growth Indicators: Issues explored respondent's perceptions regarding how productive the organization is, how innovative it is and its financial performance.
- Employee Well-being and Engagement: Job satisfaction was measured by looking at organizational commitment levels whereas overall well-being was gauged through a number of indicators.
- The questionnaires were administered either online or via personal interviews so as to capture an inclusive sample from various sectors. Descriptive statistics were used alongside correlation coefficients plus regression analyses for variables' relationships study purposes.

#### ❖ **Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis**

- Semi-structured interviews were carried out involving HR professionals in Pakistani firms. These interviews aimed at establishing:
  - HRM Strategies: How organizations put together their HRM practices?
  - Challenges: What are the difficulties experienced when trying to promote decent work while aligning HRM with economic growth objectives?
  - Success Factors: What are the main drivers of effective HRM implementation?
  - Perceptions of Impact: How do HR professionals interpret the contribution of their organization's HRM system to employee well-being, organizational performance and economic growth?
- The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach where common patterns and themes were identified.

#### ❖ **Sampling**

In order to ensure representation from different sectors and organization sizes, stratified random sampling was used for the quantitative survey. The sample size was determined based on statistical power calculations. For the qualitative interviews, purposive sampling was utilized in selecting HR professionals with varying experiences and viewpoints.

#### ❖ **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for conducting the research was sought from relevant institutional review board. Purpose of the study was explained to participants together with their rights regarding confidentiality, voluntary participation as well as anonymity. Consent forms were filled by all participants before data collection began.

### ❖ Limitations

Several limitations have been recognized in this study. First is that findings may not be transferable to all organizations within Pakistan due to the nature of our sampling procedure; it being a non-probability one. Secondly, self-reported information might be influenced by social desirability bias. Thirdly, cross-sectional design hampers causal inference from occurring in such research work. Future studies should consider longitudinal designs as well as multiple sources of data thus addressing these weaknesses.

This mixed-methods research methodology enabled a comprehensive investigation into how HRM practices are related to decent work and economic growth in Pakistan. The quantitative data provided an overview about both prevalence and effect of HRM practices while the qualitative aspect gave insights into complexity and fine details surrounding its implementation processes. Policy makers as well as practitioners would therefore find useful recommendations so as to create good jobs which lead towards fair development in Pakistan out this study's findings.

### ❖ Findings

Results from the quantitative analysis showed a strong positive relationship between progressive HRM practices and employee well-being, job satisfaction, as well as engagement. Organizations with fair compensation systems, opportunities for skill development, and employee voice mechanisms had higher levels of employee motivation and productivity.

Qualitative interviews with HR professionals also confirmed strategic HRM's importance in promoting a positive work culture and attracting and keeping top talent. However, it was also noted that there were challenges such as resource constraints, resistance to change, and lack of awareness of best practices.

### ❖ Quantitative Findings

**HRM Practices:** The survey data underscored considerable variation in the implementation of HRM practices across Pakistani organizations. Larger organizations tended to have more formalized HRM systems while smaller enterprises often relied on informal practices. While fair compensation and safety working conditions were relatively widespread there were less opportunities for training and development, employee participation mechanisms, and performance-based rewards.

**Decent Work Indicators:** Employees generally reported moderate levels of job security and fairness in treatment but social protection raised concerns regarding

limited access to benefits like health insurance and pension plans. Also perceived as limited were opportunities for growth/development especially among smaller organizations in some sectors.

**Economic Growth Indicators:** Employee perceptions about organizational productivity and innovation varied greatly. Though some organizations were seen as dynamic and innovative others were viewed as stagnant with resistance to change. Financial performance was generally seen positively although there are concerns around unequal distribution of rewards or absence of profit-sharing mechanisms.

**Employee Well-being and Engagement:** There was a significant positive relationship between HRM practices on one hand and employee wellbeing in terms health status quality life-job satisfaction organizational commitment at large at large continuum between these various aspects. According to this finding the study supports earlier research findings pointing out that human resource management has an essential role in shaping attitudes towards work-life integration through enhancing workplace environment that enhance perception thereof employees.

#### ❖ Qualitative Findings

**HRM Strategies:** Interviews with human resource management professionals revealed that there was an increasing realization of the significance of strategic human resource management in realizing organization's goals. However, the implementation of strategic HRM was often hindered by resource constraints, lack of top management support, and resistance to change from traditional mindsets. Some organizations were actively working to align HRM with business objectives while others struggled to move beyond a compliance-focused approach.

**Challenges:** HR professionals identified several key challenges in promoting decent work and aligning HRM with economic growth as follows:

- **Informal Economy:** This presented a major problem given the widespread nature of informal employment in Pakistan which is characterized by lack of legal protection and social security for workers.
- **Skills Gap:** The mismatch between what is demanded by the industry today and what skills are available within hinders productivity as well as innovation.
- **Gender Disparity:** Women faced significant barriers to entering and advancing in the workforce thereby limiting their contribution to economic growth.
- **Limited Resources:** Many organizations especially smaller ones lacked enough financial resources besides being deprived of human capital needed for sustaining comprehensive human resource management programs.

### ❖ Success Factors

- Strong Leadership: Committed leadership that prioritized employee well-being recognized HRM strategic value.
- Employee Involvement: Engaging employees in design and implementation of human resource management practices fostered ownership and buy-in.
- Continuous Learning: Investing in training and development for both HR professionals and employees to build capacity and adapt them to changing needs.
- Data-Driven Decision Making: Using data and analytics to measure the impact of HRM practices to make informed decisions.
- When it comes to evaluating the impact of HRM on employee well-being, organizational performance and, in the long run, even economic growth, HR professionals have generally held a positive view. Nonetheless, none of this can be achieved without policymakers, business leaders as well as the entire society having a better understanding of HRM's role in strategy.

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>
Agree	30	56	18	30	3
Neutral	17	12	14	6	8
Disagree	2	1	8	27	0
Strongly disagree	5	0	0	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>35</b>

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	d f	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	207.323	1 6	.024

Using the chi-square test with 16 degree of freedom, it is found that  $p < 0.05$  indicates that there is a significant difference between urban and rural women’s perception about the role of knowledge sharing in women empowerment. As the p-value is less than chosen significance level (0.05): Thus, null hypothesis rejected.

## Discussion

Human resource management has significant implications for equitable employment opportunities and economic development within Pakistan as indicated in this study. Organizations can make things work out well for both the employees and themselves by going beyond compliance and adopting a strategic approach to business. This will help in growing the economy at national level as well.

This research has produced findings that present a multifaceted picture of the human resource landscape of Pakistan. But there is an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of strategic human resource management, its implementation remains uneven with considerable variation across industries and organizations. In this context, it is evident that we need diverse strategies to promote good jobs and use HRM for economic prosperity.

Human capital investment is important because it can lead to employee engagement which in turn promotes employees’ wellbeing; hence, improves organizational performance when workers are involved in making decisions about their affairs at work place. When workers are provided with opportunity to develop their talents, when they are treated fairly, and when they are given a voice in the decision-making process, they are more likely to be satisfied, motivated, and productive. Thus, better organizational performance leading to overall economy enlargement can come from this.

However, these difficulties discovered through this enquiry cannot be ignored. There are enormous challenges towards attainment of decent work for all. These barriers include informal employment, skill mismatch among job seekers resulting into unemployment, gender inequality as well as scarcity of resources. It therefore implies that cooperation between policy makers, businesses communities and members of civil society is necessary for creating environment that supports decent work but also equipping people with skills required for survival.

Qualitative research findings shed light on how complex HRM practices are implemented in Pakistan (Jamal et al., 2011). While some companies have embraced strategic human resource management (SHRM), others continue to grapple with moving beyond a compliance-based strategy (Chelladurai & Kerwin 2007). Consequently, it highlights the need for higher recognition and understanding of the strategic role played by human resource management on the part of business executives and politicians. It also emphasizes the importance of availing resources and support to HR professionals for effective delivery of human resource management services.

Organizations looking at using HRM as a means to achieve decent work and rapid expansion would benefit from insights provided in this research through success criteria. Some key components needed for successful implementation of human resource management include strong leadership, employee involvement, continuous learning and data-driven decision making. These practices can be used by organizations to create conducive working environment that results in engaged; productive employees committed towards achieving organizational objectives.

Moreover, the study's results also expose the importance of addressing systemic challenges that hinder economic growth and adequate job opportunities. The informal economy, skills mismatches and gender imbalances need to be tackled through a synergy of efforts by multiple actors. To promote gender equality at the workplace, policy makers must place more emphasis on strengthening labor laws and enforcement mechanisms as well as investing in education and skills training. Ethical business practices, investment in workforce, and a culture that respects everyone are some of the things businesses should not afford doing without.

There are significant implications for future employment in Pakistan that can be drawn from these findings. As Pakistan continues to grow and its labor force keeps changing in terms of structure, human resource management will have a greater role to play in the coming years. By taking an HRM approach that is strategic, organizations can enhance not only employee welfare but also improve their working conditions thereby increasing productivity levels while encouraging creativity and competitiveness. This could lead to long term economic growth as well as hope for the better tomorrow.

To sum up, this study illustrates how HRM has affected dignity at work places and development of Pakistan's national economy over time. The findings have implications for politicians, organizations as well as HR managers who want to create a society that is both more egalitarian and richer. If it confronts its difficulties while embracing its opportunities with regard to the situation it currently finds itself in, Pakistan could use HRM (Human Resource Management) as an effective tool towards meeting its developmental targets for a better tomorrow for all its citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The study examines the potential of human resource management (HRM) to be an effective tool for driving social and economic development in Pakistan. Organizations can contribute to a better future for their personnel as well as for the country if they accept recognition of decent work, investment in human capital and promote positive culture at work.

A stunning revelation from this research is that Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a significant role in promoting decent work and driving economic growth in Pakistan. This finding reinforces a gripping saga that HRM is not just compliance-driven but rather a strategic tool capable of unlocking human potential, enhancing organizational performance, and contributing to national development. The research has clearly shown that progressive human resource management practices such as fair pay policies, robust training programs, empowerment of employees and employee well-being significantly enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. These outcomes lead to a ripple effect which affects organization's performance, innovation capacity improvement and eventually economic growth.

However, according to the findings of this research there are challenges facing full realization of the potential of human resource management in Pakistan. A number of difficult challenges such as; dominance of informal employment; persistent skills gaps; gender disparities; finite resources exists. It takes joint effort by policy makers, corporate executives' managers with HRP roles and civil society members to create an environment where there can be decent jobs and human capital grows.

These findings thus point towards subsequent actions. For instance, it is vitally important for policymakers to prioritize enhancement labor laws regarding mechanisms used in enforcing them and social protection systems so as ensure that every worker enjoys basic rights regardless his/her employment situation. Organizational HRM practices should be aligned with the objectives of organizations or national development priorities hence requiring companies practicing it to adopt strategic approach on HRM. To achieve this there must be investments put into employee professional development, culture based on respect

and diversity established as well as acknowledgement that human capital is intrinsically valuable.

Thus, it is the responsibility of human resource professionals as custodians of the human side inside organizations to uphold decent work values and advocate for employee empowerment, wellbeing. Educational institutions have a major role when it comes to equipping people with skills and knowledge required to fit in a dynamic and competitive labor market. The building of a proficient workforce is one way through which Pakistan's productivity, competitiveness, and ability to innovate can be improved.

To sum up, the results of this research indicate that human resource management has a transformative role in Pakistan. Companies can improve employees' lives and promote a fairer, more productive and more sustainable future for the whole country by giving priority to good work, developing their workforce's capabilities and creating a positive working environment. The road to decent work as well as economic growth is an ongoing journey; however, through concerted efforts and strategic human resource management practices, Pakistan will be able to unlock its potential fully and build a better world for all.

### **Recommendations**

There are some recommendations that can be derived from the results of this study:

1. For policymakers: reinforce labor legislations and enforcement means so as to ensure adequate work conditions.
2. For organizations: adopt strategic human resource management (HRM) practices that prioritize employee welfare, skills development, and involvement.
3. For HR experts: embrace their role as defenders of decent work and advocate for progressive human resources management (HRM) policies.
4. For educational institutions: integrate HRM training and education into curricula to produce a talented workforce.

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Correspondence:

Syed Usman Shahid

justux@hotmail.com

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