Nexus Employee Engagement and Human Resource Management Practices: A Mediation Study through Psychological Involvement

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This study investigates the relationship of human resource management practices with employee engagement, in hospitality industry. This study also explores the mediation role of psychological involvement in the relationship.  

**Methodology:** The data utilized in this study was obtained from a sample of 380 employees working in the hospitality industry of Pakistan, via purposive sampling techniques. While the data of present study was analysed through structural equation modeling using smart-PLS 4.  

**Findings:** Results of the present study confirms that there exists a significantly positive relationship between human resource management practices and employee engagement. Results also confirmed that psychological involvement significantly mediates the relationship of human resource management practices and employee engagement.  

**Implications:** With this present study emphasizes the significance of implementing efficient human resource management strategies to promote employee engagement, while also suggesting that psychological participation plays a substantial role in this process. Through an in-depth understanding of the fundamental mechanisms through which human resource management practices exert influence on employee engagement, hospitality companies can formulate strategies aimed at augmenting employee well-being and performance. Additionally, the study clearly addresses shortcomings and provides recommendations as well.

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Introduction

The significance of employee engagement in the hospitality sector cannot be underestimated, as it directly contributes to the industry's advancement by prioritizing great client service and tailored experiences (Vakira et al., 2023). The significance of employee engagement in the hospitality industry is critical, as it has a direct impact on service quality, client happiness, and overall profitability of hotels, resorts, restaurants, and other facilities within the sector (Book et al., 2019). Engaged employees exhibit emotional dedication to their profession, perceive a sense of worth and support from their employers, and have heightened motivation to surpass expectations in providing excellent experiences to customers (Wang et al., 2020). Individuals are inclined to exhibit a positive attitude, demonstrate attentiveness towards the requirements of guests, and assume responsibility for their assigned tasks, leading to increased levels of customer satisfaction, repeat patronage, and good recommendations. In addition, employees who are engaged in their jobs, create a positive work atmosphere, promote effective cooperation and teamwork, and contribute to a culture of exceptional performance, so enhancing the overall satisfaction of guests (Kwon & Kim, 2020). The success of the hospitality business is contingent upon the drive and commitment shown by its workers. By placing emphasis on employee engagement, organizations can nurture a motivated, empowered, and devoted staff that is capable of delivering excellent service. Consequently, this enables them to distinguish themselves in a marketplace that is highly competitive.

The hotel sector is known for its labor-intensive characteristics and the vital role that workers play in providing service to clients (Erdem & Barakazi, 2023). The concept of employee engagement has gained significant recognition as an essential aspect in achieving organizational success. Engaged workers exhibit a greater propensity towards job responsibilities, resulting in enhanced levels of customer satisfaction and overall business performance (Stirpe et al., 2022). In this context, it is essential to acknowledge the significant impact that human resource management practices (HRMP) have on the levels of employee engagement seen within the hospitality industry. This study examines the correlation between HRMP and employee engagement, emphasizing the importance of efficient HR practices in cultivating a workforce that is highly engaged.

The importance of employee engagement has become more evident in the context of organizational performance, especially within the fiercely competitive hospitality sector (Park et al., 2019). The impact of HRMP on employee engagement is well recognized. Nevertheless, the extent to which psychological involvement may serve as a mediating variable in this relationship has been barely investigated in the existing literature. The basic objective of this research is to address the existing gap by investigating the influence of HRMP on employee engagement, taking into account the potential mediating role of psychological involvement. In the previous literature psychological involvement has significant association with HRMP (Aybas & Acar, 2017). Psychological involvement also shares significant association with employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The moderation effect of employee psychological involvement holds paramount significance within the hospitality sector (Salameh et al., 2023). In an industry reliant on service quality and guest satisfaction, the extent to which employees emotionally invest in their roles can significantly shape overall customer experiences. Employee psychological involvement, encompassing their emotional attachment, commitment, and identification with the organization, can either amplify or attenuate the impact of various workplace factors. This moderation effect underscores its role in enhancing employee performance, reducing turnover, and ultimately influencing guest perceptions, thereby serving as a pivotal determinant in sustaining competitive advantage and fostering enduring success in the dynamic landscape of the hospitality sector.

This study is contributing to literature by filling the research gaps. For instance, Present study is
the first of its kind by exploring the concept of psychological involvement that holds paramount significance within the hospitality sector. Further, this study tested the mediation effect of psychological involvement between HR practices and employee engagement. Present study is supported by the combination of SET theory and the JD-R model which another contribution to the literature.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical Support**

The current research is underpinned by the theoretical frameworks of SET and the JD-R model. Theoretical perspectives such as SET theory (Blau, 1964) and employee-organization relationship frameworks (Chen et al., 2002) have posited that organizations establish mechanisms that facilitate various types of exchange relationships. The concept of social exchange relationships includes obligations that are not explicitly described. Such obligations are characterized by favors that generate dispersed future obligations, rather than specifically defined ones. Furthermore, the type of the reciprocation cannot be negotiated, but rather is determined at the discretion of the one providing it (Blau, 2017). The resources that are transferred may be categorized into two types: impersonal resources, such as financial assets, and socio-emotional resources, such as caring, loyalty and respect. According to Blau (1964) socio-emotional resources have the capacity to evoke emotions such as personal duties, appreciation, and trust. The establishment of a social exchange relationship is predicated upon the adherence to the norm of reciprocity, as posited by (Adams & Miller, 2022). Hence, it is believed that the implementation of HRMP, such as enhanced pay structures and the cultivation of a positive organizational culture, may enhance psychological involvement, hence fostering employee engagement. The current investigation is also substantiated by the JD-R model. Based on the aforementioned paradigm, it is posited that HRMP serve as valuable assets that mitigate job demands and enhance job resources (Radic et al., 2020). As a result, employees are more likely to exhibit heightened degrees of psychological involvement, which in turn contributes to a greater degree of employee engagement (Saks, 2022). The proposed model posits that there is a direct influence of HRMP on psychological involvement, which in turn serves as a mediator in the interaction between HRMP and employee engagement.

**Human Resource Management Practices**

Macke and Genari (2019) define HRMP as the organizational activities aimed at effectively managing the pool of human resources and aligning their use with the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Human resources are often recognized as the most crucial assets inside an organization due to their vital role in attaining a competitive advantage (Amrutha & Geetha, 2020). Similarly, it is stated that a notable characteristic of contemporary human resource management is the attainment of enhanced performance via individuals. Therefore, human resource managers use several strategies to effectively recruit, motivate, and retain these essential resources inside the organization. According to Qadri et al. (2022), HRMP include several aspects such as employee recruitment and selection, remuneration and incentives, employee training, career development, performance assessment, promotional activities, as well as orientation and induction. According to Emilian et al. (2009), the dynamic nature of the work environment necessitates the adoption of novel competitiveness models. These models, in turn, suggest for the development of organizational skills that empower enterprises to effectively cater to their consumers and differentiate themselves from competing organizations. The organizational capabilities discussed in this context are derived from the redefining and redistribution of roles and activities within human resource management (Demo et al., 2012). Therefore, the implementation of efficient human resource management strategies inside a business establishes a connection between the workforce and strategic goals and objectives, ultimately enhancing employee performance.
Employee Engagement
The concept of employee engagement has garnered significant interest in organizational studies because of its impact on the overall performance and success of employees within an organization (Sarwar et al., 2020). There is a prevailing agreement among researchers that workers who are actively engaged exhibit higher levels of productivity and a greater emphasis on sales growth and customer satisfaction. These traits are commonly recognized as indicators of employee performance (Pathiranage, 2019). Employee engagement is a crucial factor in fostering a culture of collaboration, which is essential for achieving optimal performance within a business. Due to this rationale, an increasing number of businesses are adopting the practice of assessing employee engagement as a means of evaluating the comprehensive effectiveness of their workforce (Salanova et al., 2005).

The concept of employee engagement has been examined from different perspectives previously. For instance, Crawford et al. (2013) have defined employee engagement as a combination of emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization. Markos and Sridevi (2010) have approached employee engagement as a psychological state characterized by a strong passion for work. They argue that this state encompasses three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. These characteristics establish a connection between an employee's degree of engagement, pleasure, and passion towards their job and the subsequent favorable consequences in terms of performance. This phenomenon occurs when workers exhibit cognitive concentration, emotional attachment, attentiveness, and absorption in their work, resulting in the redirection of their emotions and sentiments towards their job-related tasks and obligations. Furthermore, workers that are actively engaged exhibit physical activity, and their behaviors and actions reflect additional effort and energy, resulting in improved performance results (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Psychological Involvement
The psychological engagement of employees in the hospitality industry is influenced by a variety of factors. The emergence of organizational culture is recognized as a fundamental driver. Cultures that are characterized by support, inclusivity, and transparency have been shown to foster a heightened feeling of employee involvement (Kumari & Yelkar, 2022). The leadership style used by managers has a crucial role in fostering employee psychological involvement. Specifically, managers that demonstrate transformational leadership characteristics, such as inspiring and intellectually stimulating their employees, tend to generate greater levels of employee involvement (Sheikh et al., 2013). Moreover, work-related factors such as job autonomy and chances for skill development have a significant influence on psychological involvement. Employees who possess a perception of control over their job and are offered opportunities for development and learning tend to have higher levels of engagement (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Conversely, there exists a correlation between elevated levels of work demand and burnout, and a decrease in psychological involvement.

Hypothesis Development
HRMP and Employee Engagement
According to Meesala et al. (2014) proponents of the association argue that HRMP play a crucial role in fostering employee engagement. The study's results indicate that the implementation of HRMP, such as effective communication, fosters a strong connection between management and workers. This connection, in turn, leads to increased levels of employee commitment and engagement in their job. Furthermore, the study conducted by Owor (2016) shown that the implementation of recruitment and selection processes within the realm of HRM allows firms to effectively get employees with the appropriate skill set and expertise, hence facilitating their ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities with increased vigor and dedication. Additionally, Sivapragasam and Raya (2018) emphasized the significance of HRMP, namely efficient pay and incentive systems, in enhancing employee well-being (Sharma et al., 2016). This, in turn, has a
positive impact on their level of commitment and devotion towards carrying out assigned duties. Based on the above discussion, following hypothesis is formulated.

**H1:** HRMP share significantly positive relationship employee engagement.

**HRMP and Psychological Involvement**

HRM techniques cover a variety of strategic approaches, including training and development, performance assessment, remuneration, and employee participation programs (Verma et al., 2022). These tactics are designed to improve employee engagement and commitment inside an organization. The favorable impact of good HRMP on psychological involvement, which encompasses emotional investment, cognitive commitment, and a feeling of belonging in one's job, has been shown in research (Kossyva et al., 2023). Research has shown that HRM methods that are well crafted may facilitate a perception of empowerment, job satisfaction, and a work atmosphere that is conducive to support (Hewagama et al., 2019), hence resulting in heightened psychological involvement among employees (Wood, 2021). Nevertheless, the complex interaction between distinct HRMP and diverse aspects of psychological involvement highlights the need for more investigation in order to get a thorough comprehension of the fundamental processes and possible moderating elements within this dynamic association. Hence following hypothesis is formulated.

**H2:** HRMP share significantly positive relationship psychological involvement.

**Psychological Involvement and Employee Engagement**

The concept of psychological involvement has received considerable academic interest owing to its substantial implications for employee engagement (Abolnasser et al., 2023). Psychological involvement is a complex term that encompasses an individual's emotional connection, cognitive commitment, and active participation in their job (Zhu et al., 2021). Researchers have continuously emphasized the robust positive relationship between psychological involvement and employee engagement, whereby engaged individuals exhibit elevated levels of commitment, excitement, and discretionary effort (Turner & Turner, 2020). Psychological engagement plays a crucial role in the development of employee engagement, impacting an individual's perception of meaning, affiliation with the organization, and overall satisfaction (Farid et al., 2019). This link underscores the need of creating psychological engagement within the workforce via customized organizational strategies and practices (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). This fosters a workforce that is not just dedicated and driven, but also profoundly aligned with the fundamental values and goals of the organization (Shrotryia et al., 2022). Therefore, following hypothesis is formulated.

**H3:** Psychological involvement shares significantly positive relationship employee engagement.

**Mediating Role of Psychological Involvement**

The concept of psychological involvement has gained prominence in organizational research as it pertains to the interaction between HRMP and employee engagement (Abolnasser et al., 2023). Numerous scholarly sources have shown that HRMP, including as training, performance assessment, remuneration, and employee development, have a substantial influence on employee’s perceptions and attitudes (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). Psychological involvement, which encompasses emotional attachment, cognitive commitment, and active engagement in one's job, has been recognized as a critical intermediate mechanism via which human resource management techniques impact employee engagement (Knezović et al., 2020). Literature indicates that the implementation of efficient HRMP has the potential to augment workers' perception of empowerment, job satisfaction, and organizational identity (Zagenczyk et al., 2021). Consequently, this may facilitate greater degrees of psychological involvement, ultimately resulting in heightened employee engagement (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of this mediating process provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics that form the foundation of the relationship between HRM and employee engagement. It emphasizes the significance of fostering a work environment that encourages the implementation of effective
HRM strategies and promotes employees' psychological commitment to their roles. Based on this discussion following mediation hypothesis is developed.

**H4:** Psychological involvement mediates the relationship of HRMP and employee engagement.

**Methodology**
The data utilized in this study were obtained from a sample of 400 individuals employed in the hospitality sector of Pakistan. The sampling strategy utilized in this study was purposive, whereas the determination of the sample size was conducted using the G-power* approach. In addition, the distribution of surveys was conducted via several internet platforms, including WhatsApp, email, and LinkedIn. Four questionnaires containing incomplete information were eliminated from the dataset based on the gathered data. Subsequently, the data underwent analysis using SPSS and smart-PLS 4. The research questionnaire was developed utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The study utilized a 13-item instrument for HRMP, adapted from (Jouda et al., 2016). Additionally, a 6-item instrument for employee engagement was adapted from (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Lastly, a 5-item instrument for psychological participation was adapted from (Bifulco et al., 2003).

**Results**
After data collection and data cleaning, demographic analysis via SPSS and multicollinearity through smart-PLS was tested. The demographic attributes of the participants, including "gender, age, and years of service". The following section provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographic attributes. Among the participants, it was observed that 61.4% identified as male. Furthermore, the age distribution revealed that 38.6% of the respondents fell within the 36-40 age bracket, followed by 30.4% in the 31-35 age group, 31.0% in the 41-45 age group, and the remaining percentage 20.1% belonged to the 24-30 age group. In relation to the participants' professional background, it was found that 46.8% of the respondents reported having a job experience ranging from 6 to 10 years. Additionally, 30.4% indicated having more than 11 years of experience, while 22.8% reported having a work experience of 1 to 5 years. For the multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated against threshold level of 5 (see Table 1). Results revealed that all the values are less than 5.

**Measurement Model Assessment**
The present study employed the measurement model analysis in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using the algorithmic technique. Four items were excluded from the analysis due to their outer loading values falling below the threshold of 0.60. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients, which are crucial for assessing the reliability of the instrument, ranged from 0.711 to 0.869, indicating favorable to excellent levels of dependability. Further, to calculate the amount of variance attributable to measurement error AVE was calculated against the cutoff criterion of 0.50 which was 0.615 to 0.681. The composite reliability (CR) against threshold of 0.70 was also within the acceptable range as outlined in Table 1 and Figure 2. Further details can be found in these references.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>VIF</th>
<th>Loadings</th>
<th>α</th>
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<td>0.941</td>
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<td>0.723</td>
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Discriminant Validity Measurement
Discriminant validity pertains to the extent of dissimilarity between various perspectives. The researchers used the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) as a measure to evaluate the discriminant validity due to its ability to provide greater control over the relevance and accuracy of the assessment (Hair et al., 2019). The threshold requirements for the HTMT statistic are set at 0.90. The results indicate that the HTMT values are 0.296–0.401, falling within the permissible range of <0.80. Consequently, the discriminant validity has been deemed adequate for further analysis, as indicated by Table 2.

Table 2: Measuring discriminant validity through HTMT

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<th>EE</th>
<th>HRP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
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<td>HRP</td>
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<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.401</td>
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<td>PI</td>
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Structural Model Assessment
The present work utilized structural model analysis, specifically employing PLS-SEM, together with bootstrapping and blindfolding techniques to evaluate the study hypotheses (Hair et al., 2019). The hypotheses were assessed using statistical measures such as β-values, t-statistics, and p-values, as presented in Table 3 and figure 3. The findings suggest that there is a statistically significant positive association between human resource practices and employee engagement (β = 0.278, t = 6.348, p < 0.000), providing support for Hypothesis 1. Study also found there was a significantly
positive relationship between human resource practices and psychological involvement evidenced by ($\beta = 0.369$, $t = 8.222$, $p = 0.000$). This finding provides support for Hypothesis 2. This study further showed that there is a significant positive association between psychological involvement and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.239$, $t = 4.063$, $p < 0.000$***), providing support for Hypothesis 3. The current study also examined a mediation effect through psychological involvement. The findings of the study indicate that there is a substantial mediating effect of psychological involvement on the relationship of human resource practices and employee engagement ($\beta = 0.088$, $t = 3.952$, $p < 0.000$). The findings of this study provide evidence in favor of Hypothesis 4.

Table 3: Hypothesis testing through structural modeling

| No. | Hypothesis          | $\beta$ | Standard deviation | $T$ statistics | $P$ values | Decision 
|-----|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---------------|------------|----------
| H1  | HRP $\rightarrow$ EE | 0.278   | 0.044              | 6.348         | 0.000      | Accept   
| H2  | HRP $\rightarrow$ PI | 0.369   | 0.045              | 8.222         | 0.000      | Accept   
| H3  | PI $\rightarrow$ EE  | 0.239   | 0.059              | 4.063         | 0.000      | Accept   
| H4  | HRP $\rightarrow$ PI $\rightarrow$ EE | 0.088 | 0.022              | 3.952         | 0.000      | Accept   

Discussion of Findings
The significance of employee engagement in the banking industry cannot be overstated, as it has a direct influence on the satisfaction of clients, operational efficiency, and the overall performance of the bank. Employees who are actively involved and committed in the banking industry are more inclined to deliver exceptional customer service, resulting in heightened levels of customer loyalty and trust (Auh et al., 2007). These factors are of utmost importance in a sector that relies heavily on financial ties. Moreover, personnel who are actively involved in their work exhibit a heightened level of motivation, leading to greater operational efficiency, decreased occurrence of errors, and improved adherence to compliance standards (Maryani et al., 2021). In an industry characterized by complex regulatory frameworks and continual technological progress, employees who are actively involved demonstrate greater adaptability and innovation, thereby enabling banks to maintain competitiveness and effectively respond to evolving market dynamics. In essence, a workforce that displays high levels of engagement not only guarantees the financial stability and expansion of a bank, but also enhances its standing as a reputable and customer-centric establishment in the perception of the general public (Dadzie et al., 2021). Present study tested the importance of HRMP with employee engagement through psychological involvement.
The findings of the present study show that HRMP have a significantly positive relationship with employee engagement at $p = 0.000$ which is considered as highly significant level. These findings are consistent with the previous findings of (Aybas & Acar, 2017). This indicates that HRM practices e.g., training and development has substantial influence on employee engagement. Hence H1 is supported. Findings also shows that HRM practices shares a significant positive relationship with psychological involvement at $p = 0.000$ achieving the highest significance level. These outcomes are consistent with the previous findings of (Aybas & Acar, 2017) which indicates that with the proper application of HRM practices employee attachment with the organisation can be improved. Hence H2 is supported. In line the relationship between psychological involvement and employee engagement was found significant at $p = 0.000$ which indicates that the more employees are involved psychologically then more will be engaged with their work. Hence H3 is approved. Likewise, a mediation relationship through psychological involvement between HRM practices and employee engagement. Findings showed significant mediation relationship at $p = 0.000$ which is consistent with the findings of (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005) as they believe that those employee who develop psychological contract with the organisations, became more engaged with their work and organisational support in terms of training and development further encourages this process. Hence, with careful application of HRM practices will lead to psychological involvement of employees as every individual get closer to a person, place, or organization from where they get benefits. Which will in turn lead to improved employee engagement. Hence H4 is approved.

Implications of the Study
The significance of the impact of HRMP on employee engagement in the hospitality industry of Pakistan, with the mediation of psychological involvement, holds great importance within the continuously expanding sector. The implementation of effective human resource management procedures, which include recruitment, training, performance review, and employee development, has a direct impact on the motivation, satisfaction, and commitment levels of employees in the hospitality industry. When HRM practices are coupled with psychological involvement, which denotes the emotional and cognitive attachment that employees establish with their work and organization, they can considerably enhance employee engagement. In the context of Pakistan's hospitality industry, where the quality of service plays an essential role in competition, staff who are actively involved and committed are more inclined to deliver excellent experiences to guests. This leads to higher levels of customer satisfaction and a higher likelihood of repeat business. Furthermore, the cultivation of psychological involvement via human resource management strategies serves to augment staff retention rates, mitigate expenses associated with turnover, and contribute to the long-term development and viability of the sector. Hence, it is imperative to comprehend and enhance the interaction among HRM practices, psychological involvement, and employee engagement in order to secure the enduring prosperity and competitiveness of the hospitality industry in Pakistan”.

Conclusion
The examination of the mediating role of psychological involvement in the association between human resource management strategies and employee engagement has significant practical implications for hospitality organizations. Organizations can foster enhanced employee engagement by investing in human resource management methods that effectively promote psychological involvement, thereby cultivating a staff that is motivated and committed. The results of this study have the potential to provide valuable guidance for human resource professionals and managers in the hospitality industry, enabling them to develop and execute strategies that effectively enhance employee well-being and performance.
References


