

# The Impact Of Strategic Human Resource Management On The Effectiveness Of International Businesses Operating In Pakistan - The Mediating Effect Of Organisational Behaviour

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## Abstract

*This study addresses the effect of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) on the success of business international in Pakistan with emphasis on the mediating role of Organisational Behaviour (OB). This research addresses the challenges MNEs encounter in aligning global HR practises with Pakistan's unique socio—cultural environment,<sup>1</sup> exploring how adapted SHRM practises (recruitment, training, and performance management) promote organisational effectiveness. Secondary data on SHRM is subjected to the qualitative content analysis to show that culturally attuned SHRM practises have a positive impact on workforce motivation, engagement, retention and ultimately performance.*

*Now, whilst, obviously positive OB factors such as communication, leadership styles and team dynamics can aid the success of SHRM implementation, there are a significant number of OB factors which serve as key mediators. This research addresses the problem of SHRM adaptation in Pakistan's unique organisational landscape, and highlights an enabling OB climate as essential for achieving the best HR performance. Although constrained by its qualitative approach and context specificity, this study sets out its implications for MNEs and suggests avenues for future research aimed at quantifying the OB—SHRM relationship in more varied cultural contexts. Finally, the study offers a framework that would assist MNEs to leverage their HR strategies in culturally complex environments.*

## Introduction

The landscape of international business has experienced major changes in the past decades due to globalisation, driving MNEs to compete more intensively and to develop strategic solutions that integrate HRM within MNE's overall strategies. Thus, the current study recognises strategic human resource management (SHRM), which refers to the practices, policies, and systems that support the rendering of competitive advantage through human capital (Paauwe and Boon, 2018), to be essential to MNEs. Aligning HRM with long term strategic objectives not only attracts, retains and develops talent, but also renders the organisation as adaptable and resilient in the face of continued globalisation and rapid changing markets (Paauwe and Boon, 2018). Given that emerging economy is Pakistan, complex socio-economic landscapes, dynamic consumer markets and intersections of cultural influences are the unique challenges and opportunities to MNEs (Raziq, 2019; Ullah and Rehman, 2018). SHRM practices can be key to handling these challenges for international organisations conducting business in Pakistan. Nevertheless, organisational behaviour (OB) factors (e.g., workplace culture,

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employee motivation, interdepartmental relationships) have been known to mediate implementation of SHRM (Addaquay et al., 2023) in these contexts by dictating how the human resource strategies adopted are internalised by the workforce.

The relationship of SHRM to organisational effectiveness is a critical mediator of organisational behaviour (OB) which tends to influence how HR practices get internalised and translated in the workplace. In a positive and cohesive OB environment, SHRM practices work more efficiently; employees adapt to changes, work effectively together, and commit to organisation's goal (Bouaziz and Smaoui Hachicha, 2018). On the other hand, misalignment of OB and SHRM will result in less productive HR strategies, hence, employees have low morale, high turnover and low productivity (Mohini, 2019). Pakistan has a collectivist culture which emphasises group harmony (Iqbal et al., 2019), respect for hierarchy and whatever the case may be, loyalty toward the organisation (Triguero-Sánchez et al., 2019); therefore alluringly, this can affect the way in which employees perceive and forge relation with HR practises. Given this, examining OB's mediating role in this relationship contributes to our understanding of how cultural and organisational dynamics in Pakistan influence the efficacy of SHRM within international business situations.

### **Research Problem**

Effective research in Western contexts has illustrated the way in which SHRM affects organisational effectiveness by enhancing employee productivity, improving job satisfaction, and raising company performance (Szierbowski-Seibel, 2018; Pattanayak and Sahoo, 2017 and Knabi, 2019). Based on SHRM practices such as leadership development, talent management, and performance management appear often correlated to positive business outcomes (Hongal and Kinange, 2020; Schleicher et al., 2019) in allowing them to link employees' goals with organisational objectives, foster commitment, and provide channels to employees' growth and skills development (Govender and Bussin, 2020; Mwanzi et al., 2017). In multinational settings, these practises become all the more important when diverse employees with differing backgrounds and expectations have to be aligned with organisational goals (Hajro et al., 2017). However, applicability of these findings to South Asian markets remains underexplored. For instance, the MNEs operating in Pakistan confront them in the specific form of issues caused by the factors like hierarchical management structure, societal norms and a collective cultural outlook (Nadeem and De Luque, 2020). Differences in regions may impact the implementation and reception of SHRM practices (Castro et al., 2020); therefore, region specific research is needed. This can enable MNEs to understand the way in which SHRM affects organisational effectiveness in Pakistan that offers MNEs tailored insights into how to facilitate their HR strategy to enhance business outcomes in this specific context. Given these factors, this study intends to fill the research gap in the case of Pakistan by looking at the effects of the SHRM on the organisation effectiveness, specifically looking into the mediating role of the OB factors.

### **Research Questions**

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of SHRM on the effectiveness of international businesses who are working in Pakistan?
2. To what, degree does OB mediate relationship between SHRM and organisational effectiveness?

Therefore, this study adds to the existing literature on SHRM by addressing a context that is underrepresented in the extant SHRM literature, namely, an emerging market context. This research also contributes to the limited empirical evidence on SHRM's role in South Asia by studying SHRM in the context of the socio-cultural and economic environment in Pakistan. In addition, the study researches the OB as a mediating factor, in order to offer a better understanding of how HRM effectiveness can be affected in IB environments by organisation dynamics.

## Literature Review

Human resource practices based on one organisation's Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) are concerned with aligning human resource practises with organisational outcomes in order to improve such outcomes (Akdere and Egan, 2020). SHRM is instrumental because it helps link HR practices to achieve strategic goals and help organisations establish competitive advantage through effective talent management, leadership development, and performance management (Karman, 2020). SHRM is a group of practises connected with recruitment, training, performance evaluation and employee development to create a workforce that substantiates the vision and mission of the organisation (Farndale and Paauwe, 2018)

Within the context of SHRM the International Society for Applied Psychology is internationally sensitive to the diversity of cultural, legal and economic conditions shaping the acceptance of HR practices (Gelfand et al., 2017). Based on the actions globally dispersed MNEs adopt in different markets, it is to customise HR strategies according to specific local circumstances on the one hand and to be consistent with broad corporate agendas on the other hand. Bergman, (2022) argue that to be effective, SHRM practises in international setting call for a customised to recruitment, training and development in culturally diverse settings.

By that, SHRM practices are adapted to considering cultural differences, which enables a more inclusive and engaged workforce, and consequently, better results are achieved with organisational performance and in employee retention (Chughtai and White, 2023). Though it is well known that SHRM is beneficial for organisations, such research has primarily been conducted on Western contexts, which have very different HR practices and organisational cultures than those in emerging economies. This emphasis on developed markets leaves a vacuum in knowing how SHRM strategies could be customised to suit the non-western, developing countries such as Pakistan where cultural and economic factors may hinder the application of effective SHRM.

Organisational behaviour (OB) refers to employees' attitudes, motivations and working relationship, all of which affect how SHRM practices are adopted and practiced within a company (Karman, 2020). OB acts as a mediator within SHRM, allowing how employees interact with HR practices, relate to his or her coworkers, and achieve personal objectives to influence organisational performance (Saddam, 2017). In an optimistic OB environment, high employee morale and effective communication reinforce with collaborative teamwork (Mobolade and Akinade, 2021) allows SHRM practices to come into effect and help in enhancing productivity and organisational cohesion.

On the other hand, OB factors like teamwork, communication, and leadership all directly influence employee engagement, an important factor for organisational success (Mathews et al., 2018). Although the situation that many MNEs face is internationally diverse, it also means managing a culture differentiated workforce with different employee expectations and communicating styles. SHRM outcomes can be increased by effective OB practices, because such practices foster an environment in which employees feel valued and motivated (Al Adresi and Darun, 2017).

However, SHRM is not perfectly aligned with OB, in which case, a lack of alignment can result in low morale, low productivity, and high turnover, defeating the purpose of SHRM initiatives. The importance of OB as a mediator in the SHRM–performance relationship is confirmed in studies, yet limited work has been done on this relationship in emerging economies. The lack of region-specific insight thus makes it challenging for international firms to fully realise the opportunities that OB offers to enhance SHRM in these settings. Therefore, analysing OB's mediation within this particular society would bring an important contribution to the global SHRM literature.

As an emerging economy with cultural and economic characteristics that are distinct to Pakistan, the country offers a context that differs from what has previously informed SHRM research in the west and the areas from where much of the research emanates (Haq et al., 2024).

In Pakistan, the socio-cultural norms which include collectivism; hierarchical organisational structure and high interpersonal bonds affect how employees perceive and react to management practices (Zafar et al., 2023). Unlike Western context which emphasise individualism, Pakistani organisational culture includes group cohesion, loyalty, and respect for authority influencing reception and enactment of SHRM practices (Zafar et al., 2023).

Despite few researches being done regarding SHRM practices in Pakistan, it highlights that Pakistani organisations follow traditional and hierarchal systems. For instance, as noted in Shah, Irani, and Sharif (2017), HR practice in Pakistan may also be consistent with a hierarchical decision-making process where employees are often given less autonomy than one experiences in Western HR practice (Suhail and Steen, 2021). And this structure also influences the implementation of SHRM, such as that in areas of performance management and leadership development, where employee involvement and feedback aren't as encouraged and promoted (Kamel, 2019). This means that the success of SHRM in Pakistan depends on its alignment with the cultural values practised by Pakistani managers; and due to that, SHRM needs adaptation according to the norms of organisations operating in Pakistan.

Likewise, organisational behaviour in Pakistani firms is following this collectivist values with working in team, being loyal to the organisation and strong inter departmental relationships (Abbasi and Wu, 2021). However, with culturally sensitive SHRM practices that recognise hierarchical boundaries, such cultural values can be used to cultivate employee commitment and collaborations. Yet, notwithstanding the lacuna in research on SHRM in Pakistan's unique context, the responses to the query of how transnational firms ought to adjust their HR strategies inside the nation's socio-cultural set up keep on being all over the place.

### **Research Gap**

SHRM is essential, as per the existing literature, to focusing on HR practises to meet the goals of the organisation and performance increases and a rise in employee engagement. Unfortunately, a good deal of this research revolves around Western contexts thereby making generalisability of those findings toward emerging markets like Pakistan unlikely. Moreover, despite that mediating impact of OB to strengthen SHRM outcomes is a declared fact, the relationship between the two has not been empirically tested across non-western settings, such as East Asian, which behaviour with OB dynamics are significantly impacted by diverse cultural and socio-economic conditions (De Vaus et al., 2018).

Filling this gap, this study investigates how SHRM affects organisational effectiveness in Pakistan and what role OB plays as a mediator. This research addresses the unique socio cultural and economic challenges that MNEs in Pakistan must face, with the intention of providing SHRM insights for the emerging market context. The discussion of how SHRM and OB interact in the unique context of Pakistan's organisational culture contributes not only to the global SHRM body of literature but also provides practical advice to international businesses aiming to fine-tune HR strategies in comparable environments.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research design through examining the impact of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) on the effectiveness of international businesses operating in Pakistan with the help of a mediating role of Organisational Behaviour (OB). This research was based on secondary data analysis as this facilitated a detailed review of the extant reports, case studies and organisational documents featuring and shedding light on the dynamics and mechanics of SHRM and OB happening around the socio-cultural context of Pakistan. With this method, researcher were able to explore organisational practices in nuanced ways without direct data collection, grounding our access to a variety of perspectives and sources.

Secondly the secondary data sources were publicly available case studies; industry reports; academic publications; organisational documents and policy reports concerned with SHRM practices and OB within multinational enterprises (MNEs) in Pakistan. The collected data was systematically interpreted using content analysis to find themes that related to SHRM, OB, and organisational effectiveness. The selected documents were initially coded operationally using the thematic coding method, which begins with open coding to discover key topic and recurrent patterns. This thematic content analysis approach exposed explicit and implicit patterns of how MNEs dealt with SHRM challenges and used OB to mould HR to the business objectives.

## **Results**

The secondary data analysis includes organisational reports, case studies and would read relevant literature related to the effectiveness of human resource management practises on the effectiveness of international business units working in Pakistan and organisational behaviour (OB) as a mediating factor. The results are structured in the form of thematic categories to depict both the successes and challenges faced by the multinational enterprises (MNEs) at aligning SHRM to the business goals in the unique socio cultural environment of Pakistan.

### **Impact of SHRM on Organisational Effectiveness.**

The analysis of content has shown that SHRM practises are one of the major factors influencing the organisational effectiveness by improving employees' engagement, retention of talents and synchronisation of HR goals with the general business' ends (Prakash et al., 2024). Strategic recruitment, culturally sensitive training and performance management systems, which merge local cultural values with global corporate standards, were common SHRM practices observed across MNEs (Meyer and Xin, 2018). For example, MNEs, which have adjusted their recruitment practices to accommodate collectivist cultural traits of Pakistan (family references and community reputation), reported improved employee morale and loyalty (Zeeshan and Qazi, 2023). Moreover, local employees and mid-level management performed better in adapted culturally trained programmes, that respected local social norms, regarding their performance as well as adaptability (Afzal et al., 2024). Systems that included individual and team-based goals were shown to further foster collaboration and accountability. The data showed that these SHRM practices help to meet organisational objective and also created commitment and job satisfaction of employees, hence improving the organisational performance.

### **Mediating Role of Organisational Behaviour**

The analysis of data on OB lends in great support to the mediating role of OB in the relationship between SHRM practices and organisational effectiveness. Three OB aspects communication, leadership style, employee motivation, and interpersonal relationships were found to help or hinder the impact of SHRM initiatives (Yang and Lew, 2020). SHRM policies were implemented more smoothly in MNEs that had encouraged open communication and collaborative decision making which supported employee trust and adaptability. Great success in mediating conflicts between global HR practises and local expectations were observed among leaders who were culturally aware and adaptable (Meyer and Xin, 2018).

The impact of SHRM in cases of existence of OB elements such as rigid hierarchical structures or resistance to change reduced. In some firms, for example, HR practises were well designed, but strict top down management structures left little room for employees initiative and innovation (Lin and Sanders, 2017). On the other hand, companies where the OB climate was more egalitarian and inclusive, there was a link between the more favourable SHRM outcome and employees being willing to accept new HR initiatives and to contribute proactively to organisational purposes (Faugoo, 2023).

### **Issues confronting SHRM implementation in the Pakistani Context**

Finally, specific challenges that MNEs face in their use of SHRM practises in Pakistani context were revealed. A number of the international firms wrestled with the question of how best to integrate a global HR policy set with the unique socio-cultural environment of Pakistan in terms of values like respect for authority, loyalty to family, and social collectivism which so significantly impact employee behaviour (Shahzadi et al, 2024). For example, while some people felt standardised performance management systems with individual metrics were incompatible with local employees' preference for team and community-based approaches (Eze et al., 2018), the experience seemed to suggest that metrics did not need to be considered in isolation (Williams et al., 2020). This mismatch resulted in dissatisfied employees and in certain situations poor performance.

Moreover, there was also a challenge related to talent acquisition and retention in cases where MNEs operated in Pakistan. Since local talent pools within specialised areas were small for some firms, finding qualified candidates to adequately bridge the cultural gap between local practises and the global standards proved difficult (Plogger, 2020). Furthermore, international firms had continuing problems with high turnover rates among employees, particularly when the employees perceived limited career advancement opportunities in the foreign owned firms versus local organisations with their strong networks in the area.

### **Best Practice for Successful Adaptations of SHRM**

Despite these challenges, content analysis of best practises by MNEs to improve the effectiveness of their SHRM efforts in Pakistan was achieved. From this experience, training programmes were customised to honour and marry Pakistani cultural norms which led to higher employee engagement and knowledge retention (Memon, 2019). They also found another successful practice that included creating hybrid performance evaluation systems that combined individual performance metrics with team-based assessments a more collectivist value (Salas et al., 2017). In addition, some firms adopted flexible work policies and local employee engagement initiatives that accounted for employees' personal and family responsibilities (Giovanis, 2018). Through these practises, employees felt their cultural values were respected and understood, increasing morale and productivity. Adoption of mentorship programmes was also constructive in bridging the gaps between expatriate management and local employees (Dreyer, 2022), hence an avenue for knowledge transfer, and removing possible friction in workplace interaction.

### **Summary of findings and the identification of the Research Gap.**

The results overall validated that SHRM practises need to be adapted to correspond with local OB characteristics in order to maximise organisational effectiveness. The role of OB shown through the data was that firms that promote a collaborative, culturally sensitive environment which also report higher success in implementing SHRM practises. Whereas, firms that had difficulty incorporating OB into their SHRM strategies faced more resistance and difficulties in realising the positive effects associated with these practises.

This analysis led to interesting findings however a gap had developed about quantifying the specific impact of individual OB elements on SHRM effectiveness in the context of emerging markets such as Pakistan. However, most of the secondary data sources had focused on general observations leaving little empirical evidence on the extent to which each OB factor moderators SHRM outcomes. This could be an area for future studies to fill the gap by conducting empirical analyses that quantify OB variables' effect on SHRM effectiveness in different socio-cultural contexts including longitudinal studies that follow these effects over time.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study confirm the importance of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Organisational Behaviour (OB) as the mediating variable in improving organisational effectiveness in case of international businesses in Pakistan. This discussion reflects on how these findings align with the research objectives and addresses the central research problem: It identifies challenges of executing SHRM within the Pakistani socio-cultural setting and the effect of OB on these endeavours.

The aim of the primary research was to investigate the effect of SHRM on the efficiency of international organisations running Pakistani business. Findings confirm that SHRM practises can be highly instrumental in constructing a culturally attuned and more motivated workforce, if SHRM practices are tailored to the specificities of an organisation including recruitment, performance management and training (El-Farr et al., 2019). This vindicates several past studies that have stressed upon matching HR practises to an organisation's aspirations to enhance performance results. The present study generates new insights specific to the Pakistani setting by highlighting the necessity of not applying broad SHRM strategies in the local cultural environment and workforce behaviour.

A secondary aim was to investigate the extent to which the relationship between SHRM and firm performance is mediated by OB. The findings demonstrate that OB did have a powerful effect on how SHRM practises are received and enacted. The work of Meyer and Xin (2018) and Zeeshan and Qazi, (2023) resulted in SHRM elements like communication, leadership styles and motivational strategies to either strengthen or hinder outcomes of OB in ensuring that employees develop favourable attitude and promote teamwork. It appears that SHRM practises succeed in Pakistani MNEs when OB attributes lend themselves to creating an inclusive, communicative and culturally sensitive workplace environment. Results from these findings showed that if an OB climate is not present, SHRM practises alone may not be effective, speaking to the importance of adoption of both SHRM and OB focused practises to achieve desired organisational outcomes (Hajro et al., 2017).

This research problem was concerned with the difficulties that go along in deploying SHRM by international businesses in Pakistan's cultural and organisational environment (Castro et al., 2020). To address this problem, the findings illustrate the socio-cultural business challenges that confound SHRM adoption in Pakistan, which includes weak organisation of management hierarchies and a preference for collectivist rather than individualistic measurements of performance. Similar to previous studies (Govender and Bussin, 2020; Mwanzi et al., 2017) that address local socio-cultural values impact on organisational behaviour, this study contributes by emphasising specific implications of such factors for SHRM implementation. For example, due to the high rate of turnover and talent retention problems, MNEs find it challenging to apply global HR policies to a workforce caring for community and family ties versus independent achievements a crucial factor in identifying the barriers to SHRM success in Pakistan (Faugoo, 2023).

As these challenges became so salient for MNEs based in Pakistan, MNEs, by adopting HR practises consistent with these cultural values (e.g., creating team-based goals; flexible work policies), were able to counterpoint some of these hurdles (Bouaziz and Smaoui Hachicha, 2018). This finding is significant because it demonstrates a route for international businesses seeking to deal with the intricacies of local OB using a more culturally sensitive SHRM approach (De Vaus et al., 2018). The results also highlight the role of OB as a buffer to the one size fits all application of global SHRM strategies, implying that the organisation structure facilitating open communication and collaboration between foreign management and local employees is key in closing the cultural chasm between employees local to the organisation and overseers from afar.

### **Future Research and Practice Implications**

In addition to contributing to a better understanding of how OB mediates the relationship between SHRM practises and performance in an emerging market, this study also reveals a research gap. Though the findings give us qualitative insight of the interplay between SHRM and OB, future research could usefully include a measure of the extent to which OB factors like communication frequency, or leadership style, directly affect the success of SHRM practises. This could help MNEs better quantify these relationships and be able to provide MNEs with a clearer roadmap for the implementation of effective HR strategies in Pakistan or in other similar markets.

## **Conclusion**

According to this study, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has significant influence on the functioning of international businesses functioning in Pakistan, with gains realised only when supported by definitive Organisational Behaviour (OB) practises. Businesses that align with HR strategies with (with) organisational goals and adjust these according to local cultural norms will motivate their workforce better, retain better and ultimately perform better. A strategic human resources system is best implemented in OB playing the role of mediating as it creates the conditions for teamwork, communication and engagement of employees.

A main drawback is study's dependence on secondary data and content analysis, which does not permit the grasping of the real time and in depth views of the employees. Additionally, the findings from this qualitative study in Pakistan may not be necessarily generalised to other emerging markets, as their socio cultural dynamic would be unique. These limitations can be dealt with in the future through the use of mixed method approaches, includes direct employee survey, or by extending the study to comparative analysis for other emerging economies. Despite these limitations, the attempts to collect data from MNEs based in Pakistan offer useful lessons for MNEs wishing to improve their SHRM practises and resolve organisational problems in culturally diverse environments such as Pakistan.

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