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IMPACT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON HRM SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATIONS INSTITUTIONS: MEDIATING ROLE OF POSITIVE WORKPLACE POLITICS

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Abstract
This paper examines how employer branding affects the sustainability of HRM within Pakistani institutions of higher learning, and more specifically, through the mediating aspect of positive workplace politics. The quantitative research design was used, and a structured questionnaire was used, which was based on the existing scale. Face-to-face surveys were used to collect data from 129 members of faculty and staff in a convenience sampling technique. Structural equation modeling was used to analyse the proposed hypotheses. The findings affirm that there is a strong positive direct influence of employer branding on HRM sustainability and positive workplace politics. On the other hand, positive workplace politics directly increase HRM sustainability. Additionally, the analysis showed that positive workplace politics partially mediate the relationship between the employer branding and HRM sustainability, which signifies its presence as a critical triggering mechanism. The results offer a practical map to the administrators of universities. The institutions should be strategic in investing in the establishment of a strong employer brand to have long-term sustainability in HRM. More importantly, leaders are to actively create an environment of positive politics, i.e., openness, trust, and equal influence, in order to generate the full payoff of their investments in employer branding and ensure a competitive edge in the academic talent market.
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INTRODUCTION

Employer branding has become a strategic area of focus in the competitive environment of higher education, as institutions are keen to realize the value of having employer branding as one of the pillars of successful HRM (Shah et al., 2021). The Employer branding, which is described as the image of the organization as a place to work, is a key factor that attracts, engages, and retains talented academic and administrative staff (Rodrigues & Sousa, 2024). Nonetheless, the specifics of the higher education setting pose a different set of challenges to the development of a solid employer brand, and it is a vital field of

attention to ensure long-term sustainability of the organization (Kherazi et al., 2024).

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have certain challenges when creating an attractive employer brand (Saurombe, 2025). These issues may entail stiff competition among high-achieving students and scholars, financial constraints to pay competitively, tight-knit bureaucracies, and the two-fold strain of performing well in both the teaching and research fields (Ikramuddin Junejo et al., 2022). Moreover, the extremely politicized internal environment, as well as vague career progression paths that are usually unclear, may damage the internal and external image of an institution, and it becomes hard to establish itself as an employer of choice.

The strong employer brand is a direct contributor to the sustainability of the HRM, as it provides the virtuous cycle of talent management (Kaušikaitė, 2024). It increases the capacity of an institution to recruit a larger number of more qualified applicants, which lowers the cost of recruitment. Intrinsically, a good brand leads to employee commitment, job satisfaction, and commitment, which consequently reduces the rate of employee turnover and retains useful institutional knowledge (Junejo et al., 2020). This predictability enables the human capital to be planned and developed in the long term, and this is the core of a sustainable HRM system that can help the institution to achieve its strategic objectives in the long term (Junejo et al., 2018).

Workplace politics that are usually looked down upon can be redefined as a positive force (Snipes et al., 2024). Positive workplace politics is the positive application of influence, networking, and coalition-building to achieve organizational and personal objectives in a win-win manner (Mirani et al., 2021). Within the employer branding, politics perceived as fair and transparent can be used to fund employer branding initiatives, assist in establishing consensus supported by a common employer value proposition, and establish a climate of trust and cooperation. This good atmosphere also enhances the message of the employer brand, making it more believable and effective (Junejo et al., 2019).

Higher education is dynamic in its environment (Prabhuswamy et al., 2024). It is a sector that is typified by a mix of government and non-governmental institutions that tend to struggle with problems of political interference, inadequate funding, and brain drain of skilled faculty to foreign destinations (Idrees et al., 2022). Although the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been catalyzing quality changes, the individual institutions are finding it difficult to develop a particular and appealing employer brand. Informal networks and power relationships are often cited to have an impact on the internal culture, and the knowledge of workplace politics becomes especially important (Abid & Alsarhan, 2025).

Regardless of the fact that the importance of employer branding has become a world-famous issue, the lack of empirical research on its role in the Pakistani context of the higher education sector is substantial. In particular, the subtle aspect of the workplace politics mediating between the employer branding initiative and sustainable HRM deliverables has not been explored extensively. This research gap allows the targeted study to contribute evidence-based information to the Pakistani HEIs so that they can formulate specific strategies that could be used to capitalize on the positive internal forces to create a sustainable human resource base using a strong employer brand.

Literature review and Hypothesis Development

Employer Branding

The basic issue of employer branding is reaching a reputation of being a good place to work (Sharma et al., 2025). HRM sustainability goes beyond the short-term staffing to include the long-term plans of developing, motivating, and retaining a competent workforce in a manner that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable in the long run. According to the literature, a direct and strong correlation between the two is strongly recommended. Having a very good employer brand does not just bring a high number of applicants, but the right applicants, that is, those who are aligned with the values and long-term objectives of the institution (Junejo et al., 2025). The result of this is an improved person-organization fit. Moreover, a good employer

brand creates a feeling of pride and belonging among current employees (Deschner-Warner, 2025). When employees feel that they are being employed in a respected and admirable organization, their engagement, commitment, and loyalty levels are heightened.

Workplace politics is an unavoidable part of organizational life, and its nature may be destructive or constructive (Kang, 2025). Positive workplace politics entails the positive application of influence, networking, and coalition-building in order to promote organizational objectives in a transparent and just way. Employer branding is an important factor in creating this favorable political climate(Junejo, et al., 2025). A powerful and genuine employer brand conveys a concise list of values, promises, and expectations to its employees- better known as the employee value proposition (Sohu et al., 2024). As the institution continues to fulfill this promise, it develops elevated trust and perceived organizational justice (Choong et al., 2025).

H1: Employer branding has positive and significant impact on HRM Sustainability.

H2: Employer branding has positive and significant impact on Positive Workplace politics.

The Mediating Role of Positive Workplace Politics

The effect of good workplace politics on the health of an organization is immense, and it directly facilitates HRM sustainability (Griep et al., 2025). In contrast to its negative counterpart, which fosters disagreement, secrecy, and suspicion, positive politics ease cooperation, exchange of information, and movement of resources (Zong et al., 2024). With positive politics in place, the employees will find it easier to create cross-functional teams, get buy-in for innovative projects, and bypass bureaucratic challenges in an effective way (Junejo et al., 2024). The result is a quicker decision-making process and better execution of HRM policies, including new performance management systems or professional development programmes (Arora & Damarla, 2025).

Although the direct connection between employer branding and HRM sustainability can be observed, the mechanism of such an impact is probably more complicated. It is hypothesized that positive workplace politics is an important mediating factor in this relationship. An organization may spend so much money on creating a glamorous external brand as the employer, but when the internal reality is characterized by the existence of toxic politics, infighting, and distrust, the brand promise becomes unfulfilled (Junejo et al., 2023). The result of this alienation is cynicism and disengagement, high turnover that eventually results in loss of sustainability of HRM (Durrah et al., 2025).

H3: Positive Workplace politics has positive and significant impact on HRM Sustainability.

H4: Positive workplace mediates the relationship between employer branding and HRM sustainability.

Methodology

This study was conducted as quantitative research. The method was considered most suitable since it enables the objective collection of numerical data to measure the variables and the hypothesized relationship between them objectively using a statistical analysis process (Ahmad et al., 2019). The research was based on the primary data collection to obtain the first-hand perception of the target population. This was necessary to obtain the up-to-date and context-specific opinions of faculty and staff about the constructs under research. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The instrument was created by using the already tested scales of the existing literature to guarantee the reliability and validity of the constructs (Mohiuddin et al., 2022). The questionnaire was subdivided into separate sections to determine employer branding, positive workplace politics, and HRM sustainability. All the points in the questionnaire were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale. The respondents responded to the statements based on the degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement, with a range of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale is highly known as effective in the measurement of attitudes and perceptions in social science studies.

A face-to-face survey was used in administering the questionnaires. This was chosen to increase the response rate in a place where online surveys are characterized by low participation (Mohiuddin et al., 2022). It also enabled the

researcher to explain to respondents any ambiguities they had about the questions they had in real time. Participants were identified with the help of a convenience sampling strategy. The use of this non-probability sampling method was feasible because of time and access limitations. The researchers contacted faculty and administrative staff members in different higher education institutions in Pakistan who were easily accessible and happy to take part. The original objective was to have a bigger sample size, but the final sample had 129 complete and usable responses. The sample size in this result was due to a major lack of desire to participate by many of the people approached, which is a common issue in survey research in this situation (Lakens, 2022). The sample was a combination of faculty and administrative personnel to give the whole picture as an internal perspective of the institution. There were stringent ethical considerations that were upheld during the research. Those involved in the study were informed of the scholarly objective of the study, and their anonymity was assured. More importantly, no personal data of the institutions or the respondents was revealed in any section of the research report or findings to ensure that the privacy of the institutions and the individuals involved was not compromised. It was voluntary, and informed consent was implied with the submission of the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to establish internal consistency. Table 1 demonstrates that the values of Cronbach's Alpha of all constructs exceed the acceptable mark of 0.70 (EB = 0.866, PWP = 0.886, HRMS = 0.894). On the same note, the Composite Reliability scores, that is regarded as a more robust measure, are all well above 0.70 (EB = 0.903, PWP = 0.922, HRMS = 0.926). These data demonstrate that the scales used in the study are highly internally consistent and reliable.

There were two criteria of convergent validity: item loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All the indicator loadings were high and went beyond the acceptable figure of 0.70, which indicates that all the items have a strong relationship with their respective constructs. Moreover, the AVE in each construct, which is the mean extent of variance that a construct accounts for its indicators in comparison to the extent of variance that arises as a result of measurement error, is greater than the necessary value of 0.50. The AVEs of Employer Branding, Positive Workplace Politics, and HRM Sustainability are 0.650, 0.746, and 0.759, respectively. This is in agreement with the fact that the constructs adequately account for the differences in their indicators, which creates high convergent validity.

Table 1. Reliability and Validity

Variable	Item coding	Item loading	Cronbach alpha value	Composite reliability	Average variance extraction
Employer Branding	EB1	0.815	0.866	0.903	0.650
	EB2	0.784			
	EB3	0.833			
	EB4	0.803			
	EB5	0.796			
Positive workplace politics	PWP1	0.814	0.886	0.922	0.746
	PWP2	0.864			
	PWP3	0.859			
	PWP4	0.916			
HRM Sustainability	HRMS1	0.929	0.894	0.926	0.759

	HRMS2	0.815			
	HRMS3	0.836			
	HRMS4	0.900			

Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

Employer Branding and HRM Sustainability have a strong and direct and statistically significant relationship. HRM Sustainability goes up by 0.481 units per unit of improvement in Employer Branding. This implies that more sustainable human resource outcomes are directly and directly brought about by investments in the creation of a positive employer brand (Hosseini et al., 2022). This is the best relationship present in the model. The direct, strong, and significant correlation between Employer Branding and Positive Workplace Politics (b = 0.779) is very strong. This means that a good employer brand is one of the driving factors in an effort to establish a workplace environment that is defined by constructive, and not destructive office politics (Edwin, 2024). Positive Workplace Politics and HRM Sustainability have a positive and significant relationship (b = 0.379). This proves that a fair and constructive politics work environment is not something that is good to have, but an actual element that directly leads to the long-term HRM success, including increased retention and stability. Positive Workplace Politics mediate the relationship between Employer Branding and HRM Sustainability to a certain extent. It also affects the Sustainability of HRM significantly (0.296) by influencing Positive Workplace Politics first, which in turn increases HRM Sustainability.

According to the findings, all the four hypotheses are approved, which proves that there is a strong network of relations between the variables under study. The analysis shows that employer branding is strongly and directly positively related to HRM sustainability, i.e., the initiative that helps to increase the reputation of an institution as an employer directly leads to the more stable and sustainable workforce. Moreover, employer branding proves to be a highly potent and direct effect at promoting positive workplace politics, which essentially produces internal atmosphere of positive networking and trust (Kaur et al., 2024). Such a favorable political climate, in its turn, leads to better results of HRM sustainability on its own. More importantly, the results establish that positive politics in the workplace is a critical mediating factor (Jaffari et al., 2024).

Table 2. Path Directions

Path Direction (Direct effects)	Beta value	T-value	Remarks
Employer Branding -> HRM Sustainability	0.481	6.051	Supported
Employer Branding-> Positive workplace politics	0.779	21.874	Supported
Positive workplace politics -> HRM Sustainability	0.379	4.830	Supported
Path Direction (Indirect effects)	Beta value	T-value	Remarks
Employer Branding-> Positive workplace politics -> HRM Sustainability	0.296	4.751	Partially mediation effect

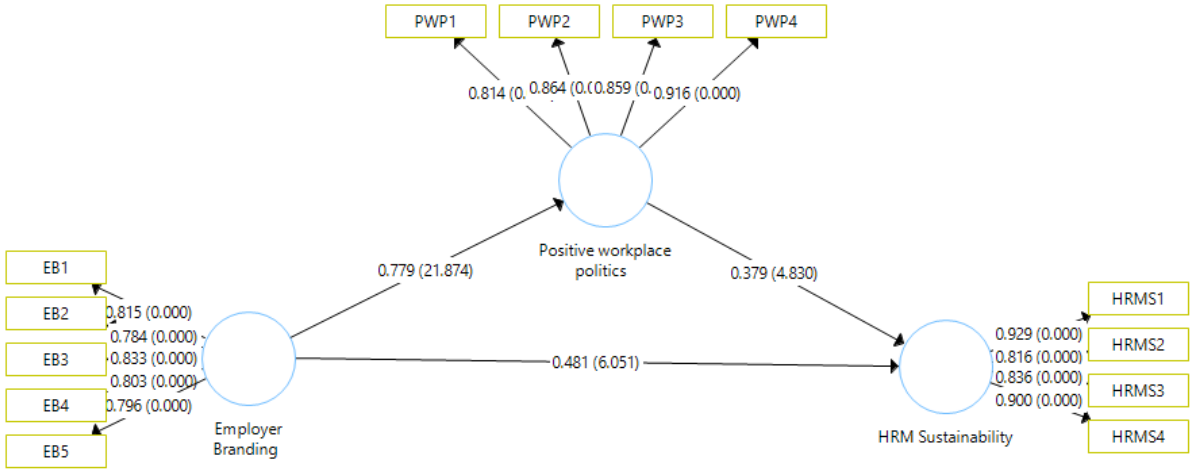


Figure 1. Path Directions

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This research paper aimed to examine the complex interrelationship between employer branding, positive workplace politics, and HRM sustainability in the difficult environment of higher education in Pakistan. The results will give strong and empirically tested evidence that a strategically developed employer brand is not just a recruitment instrument but one of the core strategic instruments in long-term organizational well-being and viability. The findings verify that a robust employer brand has a strong direct effect on HRM sustainability through improving talent attraction, retention, and commitment. More to the point, this study reveals the essential internal process in which this effect is enhanced: the nurture of favorable workplace politics. The close relationship between the employer branding and the positive politics suggests that a valid and appealing employer value proposition creates the environment of trust, fairness, and positive influence that is indispensable to negotiate the intricate social landscape of academic institutions. Finally, the validated partial mediation model proves that the sustainability of human resources of an institution is realized not only directly, through the attractiveness of the brand, but also indirectly, by establishing a favorable internal political environment that enables teamwork and minimizes counterproductive practices. To Pakistani HEIs that are struggling with brain drain and internal issues, this paper highlights the importance of investing in an authentic employer brand as an investment in the development of a strong, stable, and sustainable human capital base.

Although this research provides valuable information, it also creates many possibilities for future academic research. To begin with, the convenience sampling approach and the small size of the sample, albeit feasible, reduce the extent to which the results can be generalized. In future studies, stratified random sampling in a more diverse sample of more and bigger public and private universities should be used to increase the external validity of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional design of this study gives us a point-in-time picture; longitudinal research is required to track the changes in these relationships over time, including the extent to which sustained employer branding initiatives result in long-term cultural and HRM changes at the workplace. Third, this study was concerned with the mediating effect of positive workplace politics. Additional possible mediators, including employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, or psychological contract fulfillment, might be included in future models to develop a more comprehensive perspective on the underlying mechanisms. The investigation of possible moderators, including leadership style or the kind of institution (public or private), might unveil the important boundary conditions of such relations. Lastly, it would be beneficial to repeat the experiment in

other developing nations with equally high higher education settings to see the cross-cultural generalizability of the model and define the contextual peculiarities.

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