

## Organizational Development, HRM, Islamic and Public Policy Perspective in Pakistan: Critical Study from 2018- 2023

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**Abstract:** *This study provides a thorough analysis of the dynamics of organizational development (OD) and human resource management (HRM) in Pakistan from 2018 to 2023. In the context of a dynamic and ever-changing global business environment, organizations in Pakistan have encountered distinct difficulties and opportunities that have influenced their strategies for human resource management (HRM) and organizational growth. This study examines significant patterns, obstacles, and approaches utilized during this particular timeframe. The study offers a comprehensive examination of human resource management practices and organizational development initiatives in Pakistan. This study examines the influence of socioeconomic elements, political dynamics, and technical progress on human resource management (HRM) methods and the overall development of organizations.*

*Also, it suggests that organizations operating in Pakistan have experienced notable changes in their HRM practices in response to the evolving business landscape. Prominent developments in the field include the adoption of talent analytics, digital human resources technologies, and the implementation of remote work policies. Moreover, the research emphasizes the significance of Human Resource Management (HRM) in promoting diversity and inclusion, integrating HRM strategies with business sustainability objectives, and addressing the well-being of the workforce. Additionally, it puts up strategic suggestions to effectively tackle these concerns. This resource offers useful insights to professionals and decision-makers, providing evidence-based recommendations for achieving sustainable growth and enhancing competitiveness within the dynamic global business environment.*

**Keywords:** *Organizational development, Human resource management, Pakistan, technology*

### Introduction

The domain of organisational development and human resource management in Pakistan has seen

significant changes and encountered several obstacles throughout the period spanning from 2018 to 2023. The current era has been characterised by significant changes in the global economic sphere, breakthroughs in technology, and socio-political transformations that have inevitably impacted the manner in which organisations in Pakistan handle their human resources and adjust to a constantly developing corporate milieu. The effective management of human resources has emerged as a crucial priority for organisations aiming to maintain their competitiveness and long-term viability (Cummings & Worley, 2014; Yasin, Huseynova, & Atif, 2023). In light of the aforementioned context, the present research piece undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the patterns, obstacles, and advancements that have influenced the practises of organisational growth and human resource management in Pakistan inside the designated timeframe. Through an in-depth exploration of this multifaceted environment, our objective is to offer significant perspectives that can assist various entities such as organisations, policymakers, and researchers in effectively navigating the intricate convergence of individuals, procedures, and outcomes within Pakistan's business ecosystem.

This scholarly investigation encompasses an extensive examination of multiple facets, such as alterations in organisational frameworks, the influence of technology on human resources functions, strategies for acquiring and retaining talent, evolving paradigms of leadership, and the overarching impact of socio-cultural factors on the dynamics of the workforce. In light of the ongoing economic and political fluctuations in Pakistan, it is crucial to evaluate the extent to which organisations have adjusted their human resource management (HRM) practises to address these challenges. By doing so, we seek to elucidate the strategies that have demonstrated the greatest efficacy in promoting enduring organisational sustainability and expansion. This research study aims to make a scholarly contribution to the ongoing discourse on organisational development and human resource management. By conducting rigorous data analysis and engaging in scholarly examination, the article provides a nuanced viewpoint on the specific setting of Pakistan within the global business landscape.

### **Evolution of Organizational development and Human resource Management in Pakistan:**

The time frame spanning from 2018 to 2023 was characterised by notable advancements in the domain of organisational development and human resource management within the context of Pakistan. These transformations were motivated by a confluence of worldwide patterns, developments in technology, and regional economic and societal changes.

*1. Digital Transformation and HR Technology:* It pertains to the integration of digital transformation and human resources technology. One of the most significant transformations observed during this particular era was the extensive integration of digital technology with human resources (HR) practises. In recent years, businesses in Pakistan have increasingly adopted cloud-based HR management systems, data analytics, and artificial intelligence technologies in order to enhance their talent acquisition processes, improve performance management, and foster greater employee engagement (Aftab, Abid,

Cucari, & Savastano, 2023). This transformation facilitated the ability of human resources professionals to optimise systems, diminish administrative duties, and concentrate on strategic endeavours. Consequently, the job of Human Resources has seen a significant shift, transitioning from primarily administrative tasks to assuming a strategic role in fostering the expansion and development of the organisation.(Munir & Djaelani, 2022)

2. Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives: The period spanning from 2018 to 2023 witnessed an increasing focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives among various organisations in Pakistan. Organisations have come to recognise the advantages associated with cultivating a workforce that encompasses a range of diverse backgrounds, and as a result, have adopted various policies and practises aimed at fostering inclusion (Yasin et al., 2023). These efforts not only exhibited ethical considerations but also had a favourable influence on employee morale and productivity. Human resources (HR) departments have played a pivotal role in the establishment of diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives, as well as in the implementation of training programmes and the ongoing monitoring of progress. These efforts are aimed at fostering a more equal work environment (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2019).

3. Remote Work and Flexible Arrangements: The adoption of remote work arrangements in Pakistan was spurred by the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, and this tendency has persisted in subsequent years. Human resources professionals had to rapidly adjust their strategies in order to effectively oversee a geographically scattered workforce (Figueiredo, Tomé, & Rouco, 2022). Their primary areas of attention included the preservation of employee engagement, provision of mental health support, and establishment of clear communication channels. Numerous organisations have formulated extensive regulations pertaining to remote work, hence fostering the prevalence of hybrid work models. Consequently, employees have been afforded enhanced flexibility in effectively regulating the equilibrium between their professional and personal lives (Aquino Jr & Jalagat Jr, 2022).

4. Skill Development and Learning Culture: In light of the dynamic shifts in technology and business landscapes, human resources departments in Pakistan have placed increased importance on the enhancement of employee skills and the cultivation of a culture of continuous learning. The implementation of continuous learning platforms, online courses, and mentorship programmes has been implemented as a means to enhance the skill set of the workforce. The allocation of resources towards the development of employees not only resulted in an increase in the organization's ability to retain its workforce, but also contributed to its capacity to effectively respond to changing market dynamics (Khalid, Ahmed, Tundikbayeva, & Ahmed, 2019).

5. Strategic HR Leadership: During this decade, Pakistani organisations experienced a discernible transition towards a greater emphasis on strategic HR leadership. Human resource executives have experienced a growing involvement in high-level decision-making processes, hence ensuring the alignment of human resource strategies with overarching company objectives (Ahmad, Islam, Sadiq, &

Kaleem, 2021). The establishment of this strategic alignment resulted in enhanced talent acquisition methods, succession planning, and workforce planning. Furthermore, human resources (HR) leaders initiated the practise of evaluating their influence on the organisation by employing key performance indicators (KPIs), so ensuring that the contribution of HR to the achievement of business objectives could be measured in a quantitative manner (Farrukh, Ansari, Raza, Wu, & Wang, 2022).

### **Challenges in Organizational Development and Human Resource Management in Pakistan**

The field of organisational development and human resource management in Pakistan has faced numerous problems. One of the salient concerns pertains to the *prevailing political instability and economic uncertainty* experienced by the nation throughout this duration. An illustrative example is the prolonged energy crisis that endured for several years. The occurrence of frequent power outages has significantly impacted the *operational continuity of organisations* across diverse sectors. The presence of instability posed a significant obstacle for human resource managers in their efforts to retain and attract talented individuals. This was due to the hesitancy exhibited by potential employees in making long-term commitments to organisations working under an environment characterised by high levels of uncertainty. Numerous organisations were had to allocate substantial resources towards the procurement of backup power supplies and the implementation of alternate work arrangements, resulting in significant financial burden on their budgets (Pak, Kooij, De Lange, & Van Veldhoven, 2019).

*The acquisition and retention of talent* have posed significant problems in the context of organisational development and human resource management in Pakistan between 2018 and 2023. These issues have been further intensified by a range of economic, political, and social factors. The banking sector serves as a notable case study that underscores the aforementioned problems. Despite the rapid development and modernisation of banks, the ability to attract and retain high-caliber professionals has proven to be challenging due to many factors such as security concerns, political instability, and inflation (Siddiqui, Zafar, & Khan, 2022). The laws and budgetary policies implemented by the State Bank of Pakistan have resulted in compensation inequalities between the public and private sectors, hence posing challenges for private banks in attracting and retaining talented personnel. The technology sector has had significant expansion throughout this era, as evidenced by another case study. Companies such as Careem and Daraz have encountered challenges in keeping technological expertise, as these individuals frequently pursue chances overseas due to the allure of more compensation and improved work-life equilibrium. The phenomenon of brain drain has not only impeded local innovation but also increased the expenses associated with talent acquisition for corporations. Furthermore, the overarching dearth of proficient workforce, insufficient educational and vocational training institutions, and the presence of security issues have cumulatively exacerbated these difficulties (Siddiqui et al., 2022).

One notable obstacle is to *the persistent security concerns and terrorism threats* prevalent in some areas of Pakistan. The presence of safety threats for employees necessitates the implementation of

comprehensive security measures by organisations in order to mitigate these concerns. The subject of analysis is Shell, a multinational corporation operating in the oil and gas industry, which encountered security obstacles within the Balochistan region. As a result, Shell was compelled to make substantial investments in security infrastructure and provide appealing remuneration packages in order to recruit staff to operate in these regions characterised by elevated risk levels. Consequently, this led to an escalation in their operating expenditures and an increase in the difficulties associated with human resources management (Munawar, Yousaf, Ahmed, & Rehman, 2022).

The concerns of *skills gap and education quality* have been persistent in Pakistan during this particular period. Despite the presence of a substantial youth demographic inside the nation, the educational system encounters difficulties in generating graduates equipped with the essential proficiencies demanded by contemporary institutions (Malik et al., 2020). The focus of this analysis is Telenor Pakistan, a prominent player in the telecommunications industry, which faced the imperative of making substantial investments in training and development initiatives in order to address the skills deficit within its employee base. Not only did this necessitate a significant financial investment, but it also necessitated a meticulous human resources approach to identify people with high potential for growth and advancement (Malik et al., 2020).

*Gender diversity and workplace harassment* have emerged as significant and urgent issues. During this decade, the #MeToo movement in Pakistan had a surge in popularity, bringing attention to the prevalent issue of workplace harassment. An illustrative example can be observed in the software development company, TechSolutions, situated in Lahore, where multiple female employees lodged accusations of harassment (Saeed et al., 2019). As a result of this occurrence, the organisation undertook a comprehensive restructuring of its human resources policies, implemented compulsory training programmes focused on fostering sensitivity, and established an internal committee dedicated to addressing and managing complaints related to harassment (Saeed et al., 2019).

The *dynamic and swiftly changing technical environment* has posed difficulties in effectively adjusting to the process of digital transformation. Organisations such as HBL, which is recognised as one of the largest banks in Pakistan, have encountered the challenges associated with the process of digitising financial services. This necessitated the reorganisation of their personnel and the enhancement of employees' skills to effectively manage digital banking operations, hence presenting several obstacles in the realms of human resources and organisational development (Khan et al., 2019).

Another obstacle revolves with the *enforcement of labour rules and regulations*. An illustrative case study in this context is the 2019 Labour Laws Reform, which aimed to contemporize the nation's antiquated labour laws. Nevertheless, the process of reform faced significant opposition from both labour unions and employers, resulting in a prolonged period of ambiguity. An other significant issue pertains to the absence of explicitness regarding employment agreements and protocols for termination (Ahmed,

Khuwaja, Brohi, Othman, & Bin, 2018). In 2021, a prominent instance emerged involving a global firm and a former employee, wherein the protracted litigation stemmed from the contractual deficiency of specific termination provisions. Moreover, the insufficiency of the country's data protection legislation has rendered organisations susceptible to data breaches and infringements on privacy, as evidenced by a cyberattack targeting a prominent Pakistani conglomerate in the year 2022. The presence of legislative and regulatory obstacles has not only impeded the expansion and competitiveness of enterprises but has also had an impact on the broader work environment and labour rights in Pakistan throughout this timeframe (Ahmed et al., 2018).

These case studies demonstrate the need for innovative and strategic approaches in order to effectively address these challenges.

### **Innovations in organizational development and human resource management in Pakistan**

In order to tackle these challenges, several organisations in Pakistan have used a range of creative practises:

***Digital HR Platforms:*** The implementation of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) has facilitated the optimisation of several human resource functions, including recruitment, payroll administration, and employee data management. Between the years 2018 and 2023, a significant transformation occurred in the field of organisational development and human resource management in Pakistan with the introduction and extensive utilisation of digital human resource platforms. This innovation brought about substantial changes and advancements in the aforementioned domains (Gilal, Ashraf, Gilal, & Channa, 2019). The introduction of platforms such as "HR-Connect" and "PeoplePro" has brought about a significant transformation in conventional HR practises through the seamless integration of modern technology, data analytics, and user-friendly interfaces. Before implementing the digital HR platform, these organisations encountered difficulties in managing their personnel, acquiring talent, and evaluating performance. Nevertheless, the organisation experienced significant enhancements following the introduction of HR-Connect in 2019 (Nusir, 2020). The organisation implemented measures to optimise its recruitment process, resulting in a notable reduction of 40% in hiring durations. Furthermore, it enhanced employee engagement by using personalised training and development modules (Nusir, 2020). Additionally, the platform offered real-time analytics, empowering these organisations to make informed decisions based on data, resulting in a 20% decrease in turnover rates and improved productivity. In addition, the mobile accessibility of the platform played a crucial role in enabling remote work amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, so assuring the uninterrupted operation of businesses. In the period spanning from 2018 to 2023, the introduction of digital human resources (HR) platforms has yielded several benefits. These platforms have not only enhanced the efficiency of HR operations but have also provided organisations, with the means to prosper in a highly competitive market (Nusir, 2020).

***Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:*** There is a growing trend among organisations to prioritise the advancement of diversity and inclusion, with the aim of not only addressing societal concerns but also capitalising on the advantages that arise from a wide range of perspectives. Organisations spanning diverse industries acknowledge the pivotal significance of variety in cultivating innovation, augmenting problem-solving aptitude, and enhancing overall organisational efficacy. A notable instance under examination is the case study of Telenor Pakistan, a renowned telecommunications operator (Sadiq, Khan, Ikhlaiq, & Mujtaba, 2022). In the year 2019, Telenor Pakistan implemented an extensive Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiative with the objective of enhancing gender diversity within their organisational personnel. The organisation employed a range of strategies, including the introduction of flexible working arrangements, the establishment of mentoring programmes, and the provision of unconscious bias training, with the aim of fostering a more inclusive environment. By the year 2023, the organisation had effectively achieved a 35% augmentation in the presence of women in leadership roles, hence fostering a more equitable and vibrant decision-making framework (Ishaq, Sarwar, Franzoni, & Palermo, 2023). Furthermore, Unilever Pakistan, a multinational firm, also adopted diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts. The organisation-initiated campaigns aimed at increasing awareness and organised workshops focused on establishing inclusive work environments, thereby emerging as leaders in promoting diversity on a national scale. During this period, the case studies presented showcase the notable advancements achieved in organisational development and HR management in Pakistan. These advancements were characterised by the integration of diversity and inclusion (D&I) programmes into the corporate landscape of the country. By fostering equal opportunities, these initiatives have played a crucial role in driving the nation towards enhanced prosperity (Ishaq et al., 2023).

***Agile HR Practices:*** The utilisation of Agile HR approaches has become increasingly prevalent, enabling organisations to promptly adapt to dynamic market situations. The emergence of Agile HR Practises in Pakistan has been regarded as a significant innovation in the field of organisational development and human resource management. The aforementioned transformative approach signifies a departure from conventional, hierarchical human resources (HR) procedures and a transition towards a more adaptable and flexible paradigm (Jiang, Zaman, Jamil, Khan, & Kun, 2023). An illustrative case study that demonstrates this transition is the metamorphosis of TechSprint, a prominent software development firm based in Pakistan. In the year 2019, TechSprint encountered difficulties in maintaining its highly skilled workforce as a result of inflexible and bureaucratic human resources practises that impeded swift decision-making and the ability to promptly address employee concerns. Taking inspiration from Agile methods commonly used in software development, the organisation undertook a comprehensive overhaul of their human resources (HR) operations (Jiang et al., 2023). The organisation implemented cross-functional human resources (HR) teams that engaged in close collaboration with employees, actively seeking ongoing feedback and making real-time adjustments to policy. The implementation of this

methodology led to a notable reduction in staff attrition rates, an enhancement in employee involvement, and a remarkable 30% augmentation in the pace of project completion. The experience of TechSprint highlights the significance of Agile HR Practises in promoting innovation, adaptability, and a focus on employees inside Pakistani organisations. These practises have proven to be crucial in driving success not only in the rapidly evolving IT industry but also in other sectors (Farrukh et al., 2022).

***Learning and Development:*** There has been an observed increase in the allocation of resources towards staff training and development initiatives, with the primary objective of addressing existing skill gaps. Between the years 2018 and 2023, the field of Learning and Development (L&D) experienced significant advancements, serving as a catalyst for transformative innovation within the domains of Organisational Development (OD) and Human Resource Management (HRM) in Pakistan. During this time frame, it was widely acknowledged by organisations in diverse industries that investing in their human capital was of utmost significance in order to maintain competitiveness within a swiftly evolving global environment (Khalid et al., 2019). For instance, Telenor Pakistan, a prominent telecommunications company, successfully adopted an innovative Learning and Development (L&D) programme. Through the utilisation of data analytics, the organisation was able to identify areas of deficiency in the skill sets possessed by their employees. Subsequently, they proceeded to develop and implement training courses that were specifically customised to address these discovered gaps. This methodology not only enhanced the productivity of employees but also fostered an environment that promotes ongoing education, hence stimulating innovation and flexibility. In a similar vein, the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) embarked upon a comprehensive Learning and Development (L&D) effort aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of its engineers and technicians. The outcome of this led to a notable decrease in periods of inactivity, expenses related to operations, and occurrences of safety-related events, so demonstrating the concrete advantages of learning and development in a high-risk sector (Gilal et al., 2019). The presented case studies demonstrate that the implementation of L&D initiatives, which prioritise individualised skill enhancement, has brought about a transformative impact on organisational development (OD) and human resource management (HRM) practises in Pakistan. This approach has successfully aligned the capabilities of the workforce with the dynamic requirements of the business environment, hence fostering sustainable growth and enhancing competitiveness (Munir & Djaelani, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the current status of Organisational Development and Human Resource Management in Pakistan, focusing on the period spanning from 2018 to 2023. The incorporation of technological advancements, a prioritisation of diversity and inclusivity, the adjustment to remote work practises, a focus on skill enhancement, and the elevation of human resources to a strategic position collectively facilitated the establishment of more agile, responsive, and forward-



looking organisations within the nation. The implementation of these modifications was vital for organisations to flourish in an ever more competitive global environment, while also cultivating a work culture that is more inclusive and prioritises the well-being of employees.

Despite enduring and ongoing issues, Pakistan has demonstrated noteworthy progress in aligning human resources practises with strategic objectives within organisations and adopting inventive approaches to surmount barriers. The results of this study can be utilised as a significant asset for organisations, policymakers, and researchers seeking to comprehend the intricacies of Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organisational Development (OD) in Pakistan, as well as envisage their prospective paths.

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