



## Linking Human Resource Practice with Work Happiness Through Employee Resilience: Evidence from Pakistan

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### Abstract

*It is very important for the organization to keep its intellectual resources updated and ready for uncertain situations. This study aimed to explore the direct association between HR practices i.e. (job design, information flow, employee development, and employee benefits) and work happiness, and mediating role of employee resilience as well. The data were collected from 315 employees through self-administered questionnaires working in public and private sector banks of Lahore, Pakistan. The structural equation modeling analysis was employed for hypotheses testing. The result showed that HR Practices i.e. (job design, information flow, employee development, and employees' benefits) were positively directly related to work happiness. HR practices also had indirect effect on work happiness through employee resilience. This study provided initial empirical evidence regarding the intervening effect of employee resilience among the association of HR practices and work happiness. The study's future directions and limitations are debated, further industry implications are also discussed.*

**Key Words:** Employee Development, Employee Benefits, Employee Resilience, Human Resource Practices, Information Flow,

### Introduction

Human resources or HR practices are considered important to keep personnel engaged within the organization to advance resilience to deal with hardship and contingencies (Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). The various scholars work on psychological capital and positive behavior of organizations towards development of employee resilience (Youssef & Luthans, 2009). Happy employees are more willing to help other fellows and perform much better than unhappy employees and remain loyal to the organization (Diener, 2000). Humans are important resource of organization to gain competitive advantage (Wesarat, Sharif, & Majid, 2015). Literature suggests that HR practices are the most important way to prepare their employees for any uncertain situation and to enhance their happiness at work. Work happiness has important consequences for individual employees as well as for the organization (Branicki, Steyer, & Sullivan-Taylor, 2019).

Researchers suggest that importance should be given to the employee's related outcomes such as resilience rather than organizational related outcomes (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). In erratic events, strategic HR practices can help to minimize such external contingencies to make workplace conditions better (Bowles & Cooper, 2012). HR practices can influence resilience in many ways. Resilience can be developed through various strategically aligned HR practices (Huang, Xing, & Gamble, 2016). Practitioners focused on training for the development of resilience within the organization (Bonanno, 2004). Strategically aligned number of human resource practices increases resilience (Bardoel, Pettit, De Cieri & McMillan, 2014). HR practices that could influence the resilience are flexible job design, wide-ranging training and growth programs, developmental and merit-based performance assessment, rigorous selection process, competitive reward, and extensive payback, further, extended this path to work happiness of employee (Youssef & Luthans, 2009). Khan et al (2017) described that it is difficult to imitate and show resilience on the financials of the organization even if it is the

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most valuable asset for the organization and provides organizations a competitive advantage on other organizations (Khan et al., 2017).

The HR practices improve organizational performance but how this practice influences resilience among employees is not properly explored yet (Bardoel et al., 2014). The resilience is still empirically under-explored (Branicki et al., 2019) concept in the literature of organizational behavior and HR. There are many factors in the organizational environment such as different HR practices which can increase the resilience among employees within the organization. The purpose of this study was to assess the direct association between different HR practices (“job design, information flow, employee benefits, and employee development”) and work happiness, and indirect association among the HR and resilience through employee resilience.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

The “conservation of resource theory” was used to examine and frame HR practices outcomes in organizations because different researchers have used COR theory to develop an association among variables of the study. Bardoel et al (2014) suggest that HR Practices provide examples of workplace factors that influence different attitudes and behaviors among employees. Conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is being applied by Shin, Taylor, and Seo (2012) and they concluded that resilience is a personal source that can be increased. Resilience can be used to minimize stress and strain caused by the changes in organization to keep employees committed. Resilience is a person attribute that could be developed effectively by applying appropriate HR practices (Bardoel et al., 2014). Jiang et al (2012) stated that there are several HRM practices that are important to enhance resilience among employees. These practices enhance resilience which provides opportunities to employees bounce back into normality after crisis. These practices prevent resource loss and develop and maintain resources by strengthening employee resilience. Therefore, in the context of this study, HR practices can increase work happiness and resilience among employees.

### **HR Practices and Work Happiness**

Human Resources is important for the existence and survival of the organization with other factors. It is a need of organization to make its employees efficient to get competitive advantage. In this fluctuating environment, organizations spend huge amounts to keep employees sink with environment and to get competitive advantage in market (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013; Raza, Moueed, & Ali, 2015). Work happiness provides competitive advantage to the organization (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006) on the flip side of the coin Barney (1991) explains competitive advantage means that organization keeps moving their growth by removing the obstacles in the way. Implementation of HR practices in the organization enhances the employee's well-being and makes them capable to manage adverse situations (Huang et al., 2016). Work happiness is the situation in which employees enjoy their tasks rather than consider it as a burden (Maenapothi, 2007).

Tseng (2009) explained that the good attitude of employees toward the organization creates work happiness that helps to achieve the goals of the organization efficiently. Abraham (2015) stated those employees who are happy better worker than the worker who is not happy. Oswald et al (2009) stated that workplace happiness is not beneficial for the organization but also assists employees to attain career progression, enhance satisfaction and give confidence to the employees to work harder. Workplace happiness also reduces the turnover rate of happy employees. Fisher (2010) defined workplace happiness as erect that shows the pleasant positive attitudes, positive thoughts, emotions, and positive emotional experience in the workplace. Grounded on previous literature, the subsequent hypotheses are developed:

- H1:** Job design is positively associated with work happiness.
- H2:** Information flow is positively associated with work happiness.
- H3:** Employee's benefits are positively associated with work happiness.
- H4:** Employee development is positively associated with work happiness

### **Intervening Role of Resilience**

HR practices can effectively develop employee resilience and enhance the capabilities of the personnel which lead organization towards accomplishment of the goals. The resilience can be enhanced by HR practices by socially

support them at work as well as bringing balance in their work and life (Bardoel et al., 2014).

Adam Smith was the first person who gave the idea of job design. With the passage of time the idea gets flourished and employees also get involved in designing job which enhances organizational and individual performance (Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2013). Herzberg (1976) explains in his book that job should be design in the way that it enhances the performance of the employees and keeps engaged in work. Engagement and involvement in the job is crucial factor for performance of the employee. Satisfied employees are more involved in their jobs instead of unsatisfied employees.

Information sharing is a formal mechanism to keep employees aware of the corporate vision, mission, and goals (Stroh & Caligiuri, 1998). Information flow within the organization is really important to enhance employee resilience. That organization that shares the information with the employee helps them to understand the new policies of the organization which make employee well-being. Organizations in which information and instructions flow from top hierarchy to end employees have a positive working environment to work. Information sharing also helps to build trust which leads towards enhancement of resilience within the organization (Khan et al., 2017). Organizations whose top management boost the stream of information as well as let employees design their jobs in neutral environment gave employee more control and promote the resilience of employees (Warr, 2007).

Khan et al (2017) concluded that Monetary and non-Monetary benefits make employees feel good in the organization that enhances the resilience of employees. HR systems help to develop character and attitude of the employees to never give up. These benefits make employees feel part of organization and improve optimism of the employees which reduces the feeling of burnout and makes them well-being.

Employee development consists of a planned program to build and groom the competency of individual employees over period of time for getting work done with full potential. The employee can be developed with different approaches like; employee rotation and mentoring programs (Jacobs & Washington, 2003). Explains development means advancement of skills as well as development of new skills for sustainability and long-term growth. Employee development is important for organizational development and it goes proportionately (Tahir, Yousafzai, Jan & Hashim, 2014). Employee development leads the organization to develop. Employee development is mostly depending on the will of employees whether they wanted to learn and grow. There are different approaches to enhancing employee development (Hameed & Waheed, 2011).

Umoh, Amah, and Wokocha (2014) develop three major measures for resilience which are organizational learning, adaptive capacity, and dynamic capabilities. Meanwhile training and development boost resilience (Siddiqui, 2017). Vogus and Sutcliffe (2007) expand the scope of resilience and described resilience can be attained through different process and dynamic capabilities that build and retain resources that are flexible and make organization to learn rapidly in new situation and make organization a learning organization. Abraham (2015) states that work happiness is caused by personal resilience.

Abraham (2015) explains the paths after empirical analysis and states that personal resilience and well-managed teams are the factors that influence the work happiness as well as HR practices directly influence the organizational performance and job satisfaction (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013). Factors that cause stress on employees negatively influence job satisfaction if the employees have no control over these stressors constraint and lead to burnout (Kossek & Perrigino, 2016) and these factors cause lack of trust among employees and employers (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). The following hypotheses can be made based on above discussion and figure 1 present the linkage among independent variables, dependent, and mediating variable:

**H5:** Job design positively influences the resilience among employees.

**H6:** Information flow positively influences the resilience among employees.

**H7:** Employee benefits positively influence resilience among employees.

**H8:** Employee development is positively associated with Employee resilience

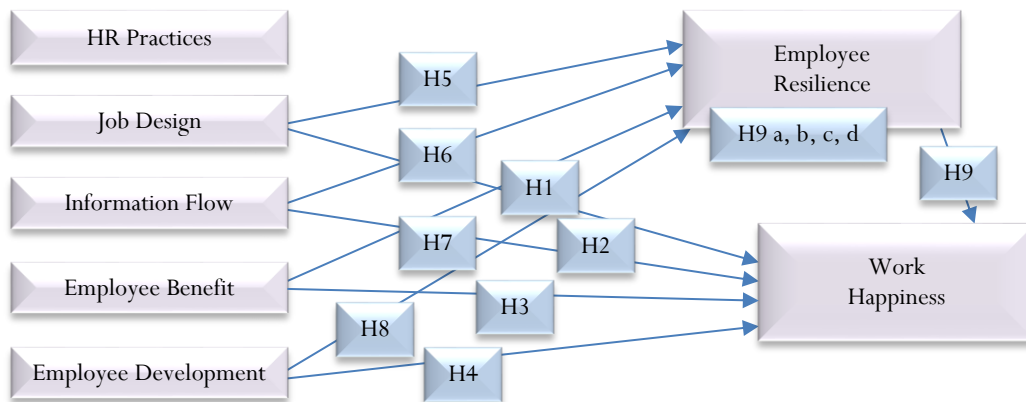
**H9:** Employee resilience positively influences work happiness among employees.

**H9a:** Employee resilience mediates the relationship between job design and works happiness.

**H9b:** Employee resilience mediates the relationship between information flow and work happiness.

**H9c:** Employee resilience mediates the relationship between employee benefits and work happiness.

**H9d:** Employee development is positively associated with work happiness through employee resilience.



**Figure 1: Theoretical Model**

## Methods

### Procedure and Sample

The cross-sectional design was used to collect real-life data from the employees working in organizations. The respondents of this study were employees working in Different branches of public and private sector banks located in Lahore, Pakistan. The data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire using convenience sampling. The sample size (48:255) was used through the application of item-respondent ratio (1:5) suggested by Bentler & Chou (1987). The 315 questionnaires received back out of 350 and overall response rate was 90 percent.

According to descriptive statistics analysis, the demographic characteristics of male respondents were (74.6%) and female were (25.4%). The largest age group was 20-29 years (78.1%), and the lowest age group out of the sample was 50-59 years (0.6%). Mostly employees who respond to the questionnaire were master (75.2%). The employee mostly who are working from 1 to 5 year was (17.5%) and the people who are working from 5 to 10 years were (63.2%) and employees who are working from more than 10 years were (19.4%).

### Measures

The existing validated scales were adopted for the measurement of variables in this study. The 5-items scale developed by (Prieto & Santana, 2012) was used to measure the job design. “Our company emphasizes employees’ job rotation and flexible work assignments in Different work areas” is the sample item. Information flow was measured through 10-items scales developed by (Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001). A sample item is “there is frequent communication within team”. Employee benefits were measured by 5-items scale developed by the (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007). “Incentives are based on team performance” is the sample item. Employee development was measured by 7-items scale of Lee and Bruvold (2003). A sample item was “my organization trains employees on skills that prepare them for future jobs and career development”. A 21-items scale developed by Winwood, Colon, and McEwen, (2013). was used to measure employee resilience. A sample item is “I have important core values that I hold fast to in my work life” was measured by using the 3-items scale developed by Chairpravit and Santidhirakul (2011). A sample item includes “feel joy at work have fun working”. Respondents rated each answer on 5-point Likert scale.

### Analysis Strategy

SEM was used to examine the hypothesized conceptual model in the current study. It’s a multivariate technique for the analysis and it is used to determine the relationships which are stated through conceptualized model with the collected data (Diamantopoulos & Siguaaw, 2000). For SEM identification Bollen (1989) recommended two

steps rule 1) Re-specification of SEM as CFA measurement model. 2) To view structural components as path model. If these two components identified simultaneously then the model will be considered as identified.

**Results**

The descriptive and correlation of all constructs of the current study are described in table 1. All the hypothesized variables are significantly associated, which supported initially the study hypotheses.

**Table 1.** Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

	<b>M (SD)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1.Job Design	3.23 (1.13)	1					
2.Information Flow	3.62 (0.79)	.185**	1				
3.Employee Benefits	3.52 (0.90)	.363**	.327**	1			
4.Employee Development	3.78 (0.86)	.238**	.200**	.325**	1		
5. Employee Resilience	3.64 (0.88)	.345**	.475**	.590**	.364**	1	
7. Work Happiness	3.51 (1.02)	.316**	.317**	.444**	.298**	.424**	1

**Measurement Evaluation**

The CFA was utilized to decide the measurement model validity (Kline, 2005; Anderson & Gerbing, 1992). Fornell and Larcker (1981) method was used to test reliability of the construct.

The chi-square value is less than 3 ( $\chi^2 = 3439.435$ ,  $df = 1209$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.84$ ) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The CFI value of measurement model is 0.902 which approximately 0.95 (suggested) and NNFI is equal to 0.56 which is acceptable (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). The value of RMSEA=0.07 which is less than 0.08 (Browne, Cudeck, Bollen, & Long,1993).

**Hypotheses Evaluation**

Then we tested the hypothesized relationships between variables of the study. For this purpose, structural equation modeling was used. Numerous scientists who have led looks into partial and full mediation utilized SEM for examination (Xu, 2007).

Hypothesis 1 means that job design is positively associated to work happiness and it is supported. Standardized regression coefficient from job design to work happiness is ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $t = 2.54$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 2 posits information flow is positively related to work happiness and it is supported. Standardized regression coefficient from Information flow to work happiness is ( $\beta = 0.137$ ,  $t = 2.317$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 3 postulate employee benefits are positively related to work happiness and it is supported. Results shows that employee benefits to work happiness is ( $\beta = 0.217$ ,  $t = 3.495$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 4 states employee development is positively associated to work happiness and it is supported. Standardized regression coefficient from employee development to work happiness is ( $\beta = 0.139$ ,  $t = 2.481$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 5 posits job design is positively associated to employee resilience and it is supported. According to our findings job design to employee resilience is ( $\beta = 0.161$ ,  $t = 3.302$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 6 postulates information flow is positively associated to employee resilience and it is supported. Standardized regression coefficient from information flow to employee resilience is ( $\beta = 0.315$ ,  $t = 6.442$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 7 posits employee benefits are positively related to Employee resilience and it is supported. The standardized regression coefficient from employee benefits to employee resilience is ( $\beta = 0.401$ ,  $t = 7.406$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 8 states employee development is positively associated to employee resilience and it is supported. Results states that employee development to employee resilience is ( $\beta = 0.184$ ,  $t = 3.781$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 9 postulates employee resilience is positively related to work happiness and it is supported. Standardized regression coefficient from employee resilience to work happiness is ( $\beta = 0.168$ ,  $t = 2.557$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2.** Results of Structural Model

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths	Standardized Regression Weights ( $\beta$ )	t-value	P-value	Results
H1	WH <--- JD	0.142	2.54	0.011	Supported
H2	WH <--- IF	0.137	2.37	0.018	Supported
H3	WH <--- EB	0.217	3.495	***	Supported
H4	WH <--- ED	0.139	2.481	0.013	Supported
H5	ER <--- JD	0.161	3.302	***	Supported
H6	ER <--- IF	0.315	6.442	***	Supported
H7	ER <--- EB	0.401	7.406	***	Supported
H8	ER <--- ED	0.184	3.781	***	Supported
H9	WH <--- ER	0.168	2.557	0.011	Supported

WH=Work happiness, ER= Employee resilience, ED=Employee development, EB=Employee benefits, IF=Information flow, JD=Job design

**Role of Employee Resilience as a Mediator (H9a-9d)**

The mediating structural models’ direct path and indirect paths were used as proposed by Iacobucci, Saldanha, and Deng (2007).

**Table 3.** Direct and Indirect path Coefficients of Mediation

Predictors	Direct effects with Work Happiness	Indirect effects via Employee resilience	Total effects
Job Design	0.142, p<0.05	0.027, p<0.05	0.170
Information Flow	0.137, p<0.05	0.053, p<0.05	0.190
Employee Benefits	0.217, p<0.05	0.068, p<0.05	0.285
Employee Development	0.139, p<0.05	0.031, p<0.05	0.170

Table 3 shows that there is positive direct impact of “job design, information flow, employee benefits, and employee development” on work happiness and meanwhile there is mediation effect through intervening variable of employee resilience so that we can say that employee resilience partially mediates.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In the current study, the relation between 4 HR practices were taken “job design, information flow, employee benefits, employee development” to explain the relation among HR practices and work happiness. On the basis of this question 4 hypotheses were developed H1, H2, H3, and H4. For testing the hypotheses SEM was used for analysis and results supported (Table 2) which is supported by the previous studies as well.

Usage of HR practices in the association upgrade the employee well-being and make them competent to adapt up to difficulty (Huang et al., 2016; Raza, Ali, Ahmed, & Moueed, 2017). HR practices found most influenced practices to increase employee well-being (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Raza, Ali, Ahmed, & Ahmad, 2018). HR practices are important source to make them feel good in the organization to reduce the stress and negative emotions to enhance the performance of the employees (Raza, Moueed, Ali, 2018). On the basis of research question, eight hypotheses were developed H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, H9a, H9b, H9c, and H9d. Results showed that work happiness is directly influenced by the different HR practices such as “job design, information

flow, employee development and employees' benefits"; and indirectly through the mediating effect of employee resilience which resulted the partial mediation. Results also showed work happiness is positively influenced by employee resilience, and the finding and congruent with existing literature. Youssef and Luthan (2007) stated that there is enough theoretical evidence available that shows that HR Practices positively influence the work happiness and despite the fact there are very fewer studies and empirical evidence available for the support of this stance.

Positive movements are the starting points to emerge the positive emotions among the employees that lead to increase the Psychological capital that comprises of hope, optimism and resilience (Cameron & Caza, 2004). HR practices that influence the resilience are flexible job design, widespread training and growth programs, developmental and merit-based recital assessment; rigorous selection process, cutthroat payment and wide-ranging benefits (Raza, Ali, Naseem, Moeed, Ahmed, & Hamid, 2018) and further Youssef & Luthans (2009) extended this path to work happiness of employee and state that the employee resilience has the positive and significant impact on work happiness.

### **The Implications of Research, Theory, and Practice**

The current study is important by considering its academic and managerial contributions. There are certain contributions; First, the conceptual model of the current study is not tested in Pakistan previously. Second, there is no research that gauges the relation between HR practices and works happiness through the mediation of employee resilience and current study filled this gap (Siddiqui, 2017). Third, previous studies test the relation between HR practices and employee resilience and employee resilience with work happiness separately (Avey et al., 2009; Youssef & Luthans, 2009; Raza, Moueed, & Ali, 2018) but in the current study both models combine to make new model with the mediation of the employee resilience. Among different variables of HR practices the job design, information flow, employee benefits and employee development (Khan et al., 2017; Ali, Lodhi, Raza, & Ali, 2018) are very important for employees' well-being. As in the middle east the banks suffer due to the economic crisis of the country and in that crisis, those banks who introduce such practices in their banks work more efficiently. Two theories were used conservation of resource theory and broaden and build theory to build the relation between HR practices, work happiness and employee resilience. Our study provides simple but foundation framework for comprehending the HR practices, work happiness and employee resilience. "Conservation of resource theory" was used to build the relationship between HR practices work happiness among employees (Sun & Pan, 2008; Raza, Ahmed, Zubair, & Moeed, 2019) which is further converted into the hypothesized model and tested through the SEM technique. Our study provides work happiness and employees resilience initial framework for understanding the relationship between variables.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study also has some limitations. First, banking sector of Pakistan chosen to conduct this study which is located within the territory of Lahore. Future studies can focus on banks located in other cities as well. Second, convenient sampling technique was used to collect the data; other probability sampling techniques could be used in future studies. Future studies can be done on diverse banking branches, as this study didn't identify the types of banks. Fourth, in the model of current study the work happiness was taken as the dependent variable but in future this variable could be a mediating variable with the employee resilience and their impact could be tested on the employee performance and motivation as well.

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