




# IMPACT OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEM (HPWS) ON EMPLOYEE JOB ENGAGEMENT AND JOB PERFORMANCE WITH MODERATING ROLE OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS


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## Abstract

The current study examines the impact of High-Performance Work System (HPWS) on Employee Job Engagement (EJE) and Job Performance with the moderation of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE). The cross-sectional data are collected from the primary source using a self-administered questionnaire. The sample size is 318, and the data is collected from the education sector of Pakistan. For the data collection, the convenience sampling technique is used. The present study shows that the High-Performance Work System has a significant effect on Employee Job Engagement and Job Performance. The present study also shows that Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant effect on Employee Job Engagement and job performance; however, the moderating effect is not supported by the results. This study will help the education sector and other policymakers use fair HRM practices in the workplace. This study is limited to a single source of data and a cross-sectional design due to time constraints; however, in the future, many other outcomes and variables can be explored through a longitudinal design in other sectors or industries. Additionally, the study contributes to the literature on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), employee engagement, and Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) by addressing gaps identified in previous studies.

**Keywords:** High Performance Work System, Human Resource Management practices, Job Engagement, Job Performance, Islamic Work Ethics



## 1. Introduction

Research on human resource management has gained increasing importance in recent decades as organizations strive to enhance productivity, adaptability, and employee engagement. Within this broader context, the concept of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) has emerged as a central theme in both theory and practice. Originating in the 1970s, HPWS represents a set of integrated human resource practices designed to enhance organizational effectiveness by cultivating employee skills, commitment, and performance. This historical evolution illustrates how HPWS has become a cornerstone in industrial relations, organizational behavior, and HRM research, linking human capital practices directly to sustainable competitive advantage. HPWS implementation offers a competitive advantage by enhancing employee commitment through exploring both positive and negative perspectives. The HPWS is considered key to maintaining global competitiveness (Witczak-Turek & Turek, 2021). Guest (2002) suggests the critical perspective of HPWS differentiates between the soft and hard use of HRM practices, focusing on systems and enhancing commitment. According to Huselid (1995), the "HPWS is considered as an umbrella term for the range of innovative HRM practices, work processes and organizational structure which are used in the form of bundles that are mutually reinforcing and produce synergistic benefits."

To cope with continuous change in a dynamic environment and rapid innovation, organizations shift their work nature to be more self-directed and decentralized, allowing employees to take the initiative in solving problems and changing the existing organizational settings (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). According to Mahdi, Liao, Muhammed, and Nader (2014), a High-Performance Work system is "a focus on investment in people, employee empowerment, good communication systems, performance management, fairness in setting pay, promotion on the lines of merit, job security, and low-status differentials". High-Performance Work System is perceived to create value for an organization by creating value for employees, improving productivity, and reducing costs. According to Zhang, Di Fan, and Zhu (2014), it is challenging to improve human resources, particularly in terms of measuring organizational performance. Beekun (1997) defined Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as "the set of moral principles that distinguish what is right from what is wrong in the Islamic context". According to Belschak and Hartog (2010), employees' proactive behavior is "Employees able and willing to proactively engage problems or potential problems in the workplace, as well as self-direction and self-motivation".

Snape and Redman (2010) examined the effect of HPWS on employee engagement with work and proactive behavior, showing that a positive relationship exists between HPWS and employee engagement, job satisfaction, and job performance. These factors, in turn, contribute to employees' proactive behavior because they are committed to the organization. HPWS positively changes the employee's attitude and behavior, making them feel important to the organization, which in turn encourages them to participate more in the organization's development and growth. A positive relationship was found between HPWS and the range of employees' gains, including positive psychological implications and increased autonomy, in studies of HRM practices (Den Hartog, Boon, Verburg, & Croon, 2013). The consultative elements of HPWS practices contribute to employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and job engagement by enhancing their sense of confidence, worth, and value (Wood & de Menezes, 2011). HPWS practices enhance employees' skill development, which increases their participation and ultimately their behavior towards work and organizational change. It is positively related to the employee's mood and way of thinking.

According to Bateman and Crant (1993), proactive behavior refers to motivated, change-focused behavior at work. Crant (2000) defined proactive behavior as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting present conditions" (p. 436). The proactive employees act with mindfulness and are more assertive. According to Parker et al. (2006), proactive behavior encompasses behaviors such as searching for ways to change current circumstances, problem-solving, planning, and anticipating future outcomes.

Beekun (1997) defined Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as "the set of moral principles that distinguish what is right from what is wrong in the Islamic context". Lipset (1990) has historically demonstrated that for the adequate performance of a task, cultural norms and beliefs are crucial, and the internal value of work lies in its quality of performance. It is considered a virtue to dedicate oneself to work. It is derived from the intentions of the work rather than a result of the work. It is necessary to have justice and generosity in the workplace to establish a welfare society. It is an obligation to engage in economic activities to earn a living, and there is no meaning to life without work.

Pakistan's economic environment is characterized by fluctuating inflation rates, periodic unemployment challenges, and overall economic uncertainty, which can influence employee attitudes and engagement levels (World Bank, 2022; State Bank of Pakistan, 2021). Economic instability often increases job insecurity and stress, potentially reducing discretionary effort and motivation. In this context, organizational practices such as High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and the reinforcement



of ethical values through Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) become particularly important, as they provide stability, fairness, and motivation that can mitigate the negative effects of economic pressures on employee engagement and performance.

The HRM concept has garnered considerable attention across various sectors, including banking, insurance, and others. Organizations in Pakistan face constraints in improving performance due to employee beliefs and religious considerations, which impact economic development. Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) has not received adequate attention in the banking sector, highlighting the importance of cultural norms in employee satisfaction and engagement. The impact of HPWS on employee engagement, with a moderating role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE), was not studied together in the banking sector of Pakistan. Secondly, High Performance Work System (HPWS) practices may intensify work, offer employees more discretion and support, in exchange for increased compliance, creative capability, and engaged behaviors. According to Huang et al. (2017), there is a need to explore the impact of HPWS in a collectivistic context, where people are often motivated to work hard for the group's interest, and work intensification might not be a significant issue in such a context. This is a new perspective on research on HPWS in the global market. The most important thing is that this concept needs to be explored in Pakistan's education sector.

In contrast to the social exchange theory, the findings of this study show a positive and significant relationship between High-Performance Work System (HPWS) and employee job engagement. Additionally, we found that job performance and High-Performance Work System (HPWS) are also positively associated. Furthermore, the association between High-performance work system (HPWS) and employee job engagement and performance was hypothesized to be positively moderated by Islamic Work Ethics (IWE), but the results didn't support this moderation effect.

This study will inform the management of the banking sector in Pakistan about how Islamic Work Ethics, or a religious perspective, influences the attitudes and behaviors of employees. This study will greatly aid organizations in improving the effectiveness of employee productivity and their positive attitude towards work, thereby creating value for the organization by developing a strong workforce, enhancing efficiency, and reducing costs. This will contribute to the body of work on HRM by researching the neglected area of employee behavior as the primary recipients of HPWS. The organizations will understand why HPWS affects employees and their psychological outcomes, and how these outcomes may relate to proactive work behavior. They will understand that the fairness perception of HPWS has a strong influence on the employee's reaction and behavior.

The findings of the study will not only contribute to the banking sector of Pakistan, but many other sectors can also use this research as a guideline. By incorporating religious beliefs and Islamic work ethics, they could achieve the desired output. This research will serve as a guideline for those unfamiliar with ethical behavior in the workplace, enabling them to understand the importance of these beliefs. It will also help policymakers design policies that consider ethics in every decision-making process and operational level.

Despite extensive research on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and their impact on employee performance and engagement, important gaps remain unaddressed. Much of the existing literature has been developed in Western contexts, often overlooking cultural and ethical dimensions that shape employee behavior in non-Western environments. In particular, the role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) has received limited empirical attention, despite its strong relevance in Muslim-majority societies. Additionally, within the education sector of developing countries, few studies have examined how HPWS practices influence job engagement when mediated or moderated by ethical values. This study addresses these gaps by integrating HPWS, job engagement, and IWE within the context of Pakistani higher education institutions. In doing so, it contributes to both the theoretical advancement of HRM and the practical understanding of how ethical and cultural factors interact with work systems in shaping employee outcomes.

The rest of the study is divided into sections: literature review, methodology, results analysis, discussion, and conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

Organizations today are not only challenged with managing day-to-day operations but also with adapting to rapid and multifaceted changes in their external and internal environments. These changes include technological advancements, increasing globalization, evolving workforce demographics, and shifting employee expectations regarding meaningful work and ethical practices. Such dynamics require organizations to implement sustainable strategies, such as High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), to remain competitive while ensuring employee engagement and improved performance. To meet these demands, organizations must have a strong workforce that is proactive and productive. One way to accomplish this is



through the development of a High-Performance Work System (HPWS). Huselid (1995) refers to HPWS as an “umbrella term for the range of innovative HRM practices, work processes, and organizational structures which, when used in bundles, are mutually reinforcing and produce synergistic benefits. Supporting this, Rasool and Nouman (2013) introduced the Total Strategic Resource Approach, which combines universalistic theory, contingency theory, and the resource-based view model. HPWS practices have sub-dimensions, including merit-based, job-environment, and organizational HR practices, enabling HRM to integrate systems without altering core practices, impacting employees’ attitudes and behaviors. However, the term lacks a universally agreed-upon meaning due to varying theoretical approaches.

According to Rich et al. (2010), employee job engagement is the active involvement of workers at work, driven by their own beliefs and energy. The concepts of Job Performance, defined by Jex, Adams, Bachrach, and Sorenson (2003) as “all the behaviors that employees engage in at work” are in line with this engagement. By incorporating these components into HPWS, a proactive and effective workforce is promoted.

Moreover, Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) are essential in situations where moral principles direct organizational procedures. According to Beekun (1997), IWE is “the set of moral principles that distinguish what is right from what is wrong in an Islamic context. By establishing a framework for workforce behavior, these ethical standards ensure that employee conduct aligns with organizational goals. While HPWS has been extensively studied, fewer works have systematically examined IWE in HRM contexts. This study strengthens the review by integrating IWE literature, particularly its influence on employee motivation, perceptions of fairness, and ethical behavior in organizational settings.

The previous study reported that the elements of HPWS contribute to well-being and job satisfaction by enhancing security, worth, and an individual’s sense of value (Wood & de Menezes, 2011). Another study reported a strong association between HPWS and effective commitment, as it is based on positive behavior and emotional intelligence.

### *2.1. HPWS and Job Engagement*

Prior research suggests that High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) are strongly associated with positive employee outcomes when implemented as coherent bundles of human resource practices (Snape & Redman, 2010). Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees interpret supportive HR practices, such as training, participation in decision-making, and performance-based recognition, as signals of organizational investment, which in turn foster loyalty, motivation, and engagement (Den Hartog et al., 2013). For example, well-structured training programs not only enhance job skills but also cultivate positive attitudes and organizational commitment (Cooper & Taqueti, 2004). In addition, flexible work arrangements that provide autonomy over time and location have been shown to improve productivity, confidence, and work–life balance, thereby strengthening employee satisfaction and engagement (Hill et al., 2001; Weinert et al., 2008; Sanchez-Hernandez & Grayson, 2012). However, not all findings are uniformly positive. Jensen et al. (2013) caution that excessive demands from HPWS may increase work pressure, potentially reducing job satisfaction and engagement. This highlights the need for a balanced perspective that recognizes both the enabling and constraining effects of HPWS on employee engagement.

H1: HPWS is positively related to employee engagement.

### *2.2. HPWS and Job Performance*

Jex et al. (2003) defined job performance as “all the behaviors that employees engage in at their work”. According to Mahmood, Iqbal, and Sahu (2014), the implementation of fair HRM practices in organizations always motivates employees to perform their duties more honestly and effectively. The fair execution of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, including equitable compensation, training, and development, enhances employee commitment and job performance. According to Yung Chou and Lopez-Rodriguez (2013), social exchange theory also plays a significant role in job performance, as employees’ reactions to their behavior, perceptions of the organization, and equity perceptions of the methods used in the organization greatly influence job performance.

Favorable HRM practices create positive relationships between employees and management, motivating them to increase their performance. (Moazzezi, Sattari, & Bablan, 2014). Employees should be considered dynamic and powerful workforce assets, as they are not just servants but also valuable assets.

Human attitudes, skills, and behavior are significantly influenced by HRM practices, which contribute to enhanced job performance (Katou, 2008). Jobs are made more attractive to employees by the introduction of friendly and flexible arrangements (Lings & Greenley, 2001). Flexible work arrangements attract more qualified teachers and reduce costs for



employers. Flexible work arrangements also enhance job satisfaction and retention, resulting in increased productivity and overall organizational profitability.

In some countries, temporary hiring is employed to achieve flexible working conditions; however, this trend varies worldwide. (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). To alleviate the tension between workers' work and life roles, organizations have implemented various work-life policies (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). In the context of our country, private school teachers are both hired on a temporary basis, and the permanent faculty is provided with flexible schedules; action is selected depending on the situation. When these school teachers are hired on a temporary basis, this gives relief to the teachers from several upcoming problems from which they might suffer in the absence of flexible work arrangements. Teachers working under flexible work arrangements show a positive attitude towards their job. For example, it is evident from their attitude that they are very much satisfied with their job (Wickramasinghe & Jayabandu, 2007).

HPWS in HRM practices directly impacts job performance through fair incentives, salary enhancements, bonuses, and rewards, motivating employees and demonstrating the organization's commitment to their well-being. In this way, employees become committed and satisfied, due to which their performance increases (Altarawmneh & Al-Kilani, 2010).

H2: HPWS is significantly related to job performance.

### 2.3. IWE and Job Engagement

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) emphasize principles such as fairness, honesty, hard work, and social responsibility, which have been shown to positively influence employee commitment and engagement (Sadozai et al., 2013). When organizations embed these principles into HRM practices such as compensation, promotions, appraisals, and performance evaluations, employees perceive operations as just and value-based, which in turn enhances loyalty and performance (Abdul Jalil & Abdul Rahman, 2010). Conversely, when employees feel that they are not treated ethically in accordance with Islamic principles, they may disengage, seek opportunities elsewhere, or even resort to counterproductive behaviors (Treviño et al., 2006).

IWE also enhances job involvement by encouraging employees to perceive work as both a moral duty and a spiritual obligation. As highlighted by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W.), work is a virtuous act that not only sustains life but also cleanses sins, making it an integral part of Islamic teachings (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Empirical findings support this perspective: Khan, Abbas et al. (2015) found a significant positive relationship between IWE and job involvement, while Yousef (2000) noted that higher levels of IWE are associated with greater workplace satisfaction. This suggests that employees guided by IWE are more likely to put in their full effort, align with organizational goals, and contribute to long-term performance.

From a theoretical standpoint, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) helps explain these dynamics. When employees perceive that their organization upholds ethical principles aligned with Islamic values, they are more inclined to reciprocate with loyalty, commitment, and higher engagement. On the other hand, perceived violations of fairness and justice may weaken this exchange, reducing motivation and attachment. Taken together, these insights highlight the pivotal role of IWE in shaping employee behavior in HRM settings and underscore its importance as a moderating factor in the relationship between HPWS, job engagement, and performance.

H3: Islamic Work ethics have a direct relationship with Employee Engagement.

### 2.4. IWE and Job Performance

According to Debeljak, Krkac, and Ragab Rizk (2008), "Islamic work ethics is a direction towards work and approaches work as a valuable asset in the human's lives." Islamic work ethics have a direct relationship with employees' job performance, as they contribute to employee satisfaction, increased commitment, and loyalty, ultimately improving job performance (Jalil, Azam, & Rahman, 2010). Organizational justice is crucial in maintaining job performance, as employees who perceive unethical treatment or unfair treatment may seek opportunities elsewhere (Linda K. Treviño et al., 2006). According to Snipes et al. (2005), Job satisfaction is an emotional state of individuals towards their jobs.

Haroon, Zaman, and Rehman (2012) conducted a research study in Pakistan's healthcare sector. They found that IWE and job satisfaction were positively correlated with each other ( $r = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis indicated that IWE had a significant impact on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.754$ ,  $R^2 = 0.135$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Bockris and Khan (2013) conducted a study with 182 working individuals in Pakistan, finding that IWE and job satisfaction were significantly and positively correlated ( $r = 0.26$ ,  $p$



< 0.01). Regression analysis further indicated that IWE has a positive effect on job satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). They stated that the teachings of Islam and IWE suggest that there is no life without work.

The Quran says, “word of thy Lord doth find its fulfillment in truth and in justice; none can change His words” (Quran 6:115).

In the Islamic context, fair practices, such as distributing wealth in those who deserve it, making decisions that are appropriate to the situation, and placing employees in positions that match their abilities, motivate employees and foster trust in the organization, ultimately leading to improved job performance.

H4: Islamic Work Ethics has a positive and significant relationship with job performance.

### *2.5. Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics between HPWS and Job Engagement*

Islamic Work Ethics significantly influences employee attitudes and behavior by providing them with information about what is right and wrong (Ghorbani et al., 2014). Organizational human resource policies and practices are crucial for employee engagement.

Islamic Work Ethics moderate the relationship between HPWS practices and job performance, as employees are motivated when they understand fair treatment and reasonable compensation. This motivation leads to increased job performance and loyalty. According to Jaros (2007), the importance of positive job experience and organizational practices in fostering employee commitment and engagement. Islamic work ethics practices, which ensure honesty and fairness, can strengthen the relationship between HPWS and employee engagement. Based on social exchange theory, Haar and Spell (2004) suggest that employees show great commitment because the organization meets their expectations.

According to Cojuharenco and Patient (2013), employees' behavior and attitude towards the organization depend on trust, fair treatment, and ethical guidelines. Employee loyalty and satisfaction increase when fair remuneration and ethical treatment are provided, leading to increased attention to work and improved job performance.

H5: The relationship of HPWS and Job Engagement is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics in a way that this positive relationship is strong when Islamic Work Ethics is high.

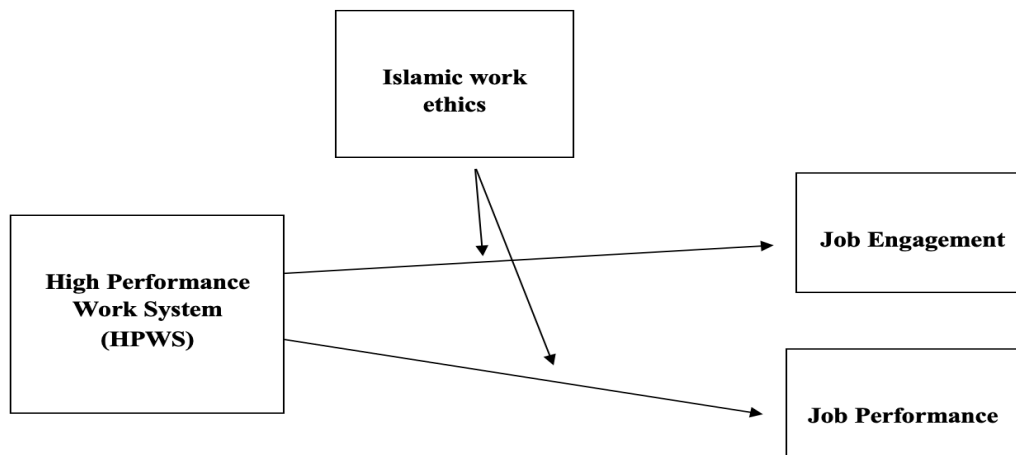
### *2.6. Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics between HPWS and Job Performance*

Islamic work ethics influence employee attitude and behavior by providing them with information about what is right and wrong (Ghorbani et al., 2014). The human resource policies and practices of an organization have a significant impact on employee behavior and performance. According to Huselid (1995), job performance is influenced by the effectiveness of HRM practices, as employees are motivated when they understand fair treatment and reasonable compensation.

The organizational justice theory also supports the relationship, as justice is important for all employees; however, employees from different cultures may behave differently (Crawshaw et al., 2013). According to Cojuharenco and Patient (2013) organizational justice theory supports this relationship, as employees' behavior and attitude towards organizations depend on trust in fair treatment and perception of organizational justice. Employees are more loyal and satisfied when they receive fair remuneration and ethical treatment, leading to improved job performance.

H6: The relationship of HRM practices and Job Performance is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics in a way that this positive relationship is strong when Islamic Work Ethics is high.

Figure 1. Research Model



Source: Authors' elaboration

“While prior research has established the positive effects of HPWS on employee outcomes, many studies have examined these relationships in Western contexts, with limited attention to culturally specific factors such as Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) (Huselid, 1995; Sun et al., 2007; Ali, 1988). Furthermore, although employee engagement is often recognized as a mediator between HPWS and performance, few studies have explored how ethical frameworks influence this process. By critically evaluating these studies, it becomes evident that the interaction between high-performance practices and IWE remains underexplored. This gap underscores the need for the present research, which investigates how HPWS, moderated by IWE, affects job engagement and performance, providing insights relevant to organizations operating in Islamic cultural contexts.”

### 2.7. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which provides a theoretical basis for examining the relationship between High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), job engagement, and job performance, with Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as a moderator. The survey design was selected as the most appropriate approach to capture employee perceptions of HR practices, ethical values, and behavioral outcomes in organizational settings. Validated scales for HPWS, employee engagement, job performance, and IWE were adopted from prior studies to ensure construct reliability and validity. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to achieve representativeness across different organizational sectors, and data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), which is suitable for testing complex relationships and moderating effects. These methodological choices ensure that the study's arguments are built on a strong theoretical foundation and supported by a rigorous empirical design.

High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) affect employee outcomes through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). When organizations implement HR practices such as training, performance-based rewards, and participatory decision-making, employees perceive these practices as signals of organizational support and investment. This perception triggers a sense of obligation to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, such as higher engagement and stronger performance (Snape & Redman, 2010; Alfes et al., 2013). Specifically, HPWS enhances employees' skills and autonomy, which increases their confidence and intrinsic motivation, leading to deeper psychological engagement. In turn, engaged employees are more likely to exert discretionary effort, demonstrate proactive behavior, and contribute to organizational effectiveness (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Thus, the mechanism linking HPWS to job performance operates through increased job engagement, making engagement a key mediator in this relationship.

The moderating role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) is expected because it shapes how employees interpret and respond to HR practices implemented under High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). Employees with strong adherence to IWE perceive organizational practices through the lens of fairness, justice, and moral responsibility. When HPWS are consistent with these



values, such as offering equitable rewards, transparent appraisals, and opportunities for participation, employees guided by IWE are more likely to view them positively, thereby enhancing engagement and performance (Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008; Khan et al., 2015). Conversely, in the absence of strong ethical values, the same practices may be interpreted with skepticism, limiting their effectiveness. From a social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964), IWE amplifies the reciprocity mechanism by encouraging employees to reciprocate with loyalty and discretionary effort in response to supportive HR practices. Empirical studies have also shown that IWE fosters organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and involvement (Yousef, 2000; Rokhman, 2010), suggesting its potential to strengthen the HPWS–engagement–performance pathway. Therefore, IWE is theorized as a boundary condition that enhances the positive influence of HPWS on employee outcomes.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This exploratory study examines the impact of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on employee job engagement and performance, with Islamic Work Ethics serving as a moderating factor. The research is conducted at universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Unit of analysis), using self-administered questionnaires for data collection. Cross-sectional data have been collected in this study. The primary reason for using self-administered questionnaires as a survey method was that, in the past, most research has employed this technique for data collection in similar studies. Moreover, being cost-effective, it has the advantage of less interference from the researcher, hence reducing the possible bias from the respondent. This technique helps respondents complete the questionnaires with ease, allowing most to be master's (55%), bachelor's (32.4%), and MPhil (12.6%) degree holders. to take their time for a justified and well-thought-out response. The study was conducted in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, two major urban centers in Pakistan. These cities were selected because they host a diverse range of organizations, including public and private sector firms, which allows for broader generalizability of findings within urban workplaces. Additionally, their geographic proximity and accessibility facilitated efficient data collection while maintaining a representative sample of employees across different industries. This selection provides a practical and relevant context for examining how High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) influence job engagement and performance.

#### 3.2. Population and Sampling

##### 3.2.1. Population

The study involved distributing 450 questionnaires to universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, yielding a 71% response rate, with males comprising 79% and females 21%, based on age, education, and experience.

##### 3.2.2. Demographics of the Respondents

**Table 1.** Age

<i>Age</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>	20-30	135	42.5	42.5	42.5
	31-40	183	57.5	57.5	100.0
	Total	318	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' elaboration

The table above shows the respondents' ages in relation to the research. There are 135 individuals aged 20-30 years, and 183 are aged 31-40.



**Table 2.** Gender

<i>Gender</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Male	250	78.6	78.6	78.6
	Female	68	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	318	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' elaboration

The gender table indicates that 68 females are contributing to the current research, while 250 male respondents participate in the study.

**Table 3.** Marital Status

<i>Marital Status</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Married	181	56.9	56.9	56.9
	Unmarried	137	43.1	43.1	100.0
	Total	318	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' elaboration

The analysis reveals that 181 respondents are married, accounting for 56.9% of the total respondents, and 137 are unmarried, which is 43.1%.

**Table 4.** Qualification

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Bachelor	103	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Master	175	55.0	55.0	87.4
	MS/MPhil	40	12.6	12.6	100.0
	Total	318	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' elaboration

The research, conducted in a government sector organization, reveals that the majority of respondents hold degrees from various institutes, with 32.9% having a bachelor's degree, 55.0% having a master's degree, and 12.6% having an MS/MPhil degree.

**Table 5.** Experience

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
<i>Valid</i>	Below 5	72	22.6	22.6	22.6
	5-10	155	48.7	48.7	71.4
	10-Above	91	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	318	100.0	100.0	

Source: Authors' elaboration

The respondents 72 are having the experience less than 5 years, 155 are having 5-10 years' experience, and 91 are having 10 and above years or more of experience in different departments

### 3.2.3. Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling falls under the non-probability sampling category, where all individuals do not have an equal chance of being selected.



### 3.3. Scale and Measures

#### 3.3.1. High Performance Work System

The High Performance Work System will be measured by fifteen (15) items taken from the (Delery & Shaw, 2001). One of its items is “Associates in this job have a reasonable and fair complaint process”. The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability of the scale was 0.731. The responses were obtained through a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### 3.3.2. Job Engagement

The Job Engagement will be measured by twelve (12) items taken from the (Delery and Shaw, 2001). One of its items is “Do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?” The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability of the scale was 0.81. The responses were obtained through a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### 3.3.3. Job Performance

This variable was measured by using a scale with 5 items Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1989). One of the sample items was “I fulfill all responsibilities required by my job.” Cronbach alpha reliability of this scale is 0.770 which indicates the satisfactory measuring reliability. The responses were obtained through a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### 3.3.4. Islamic Work Ethics

This variable was measured using scale of Ali (1992) with 17 items scale. One of the sample items was “Producing more than enough to meet one’s personal needs contributes to the prosperity of society as a whole.” The Cronbach’s alpha reliability of this scale is 0.846, indicating satisfactory measurement reliability. The responses were obtained through a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Table 6.** Instrumentation sources, Items & reliabilities

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Reliability</i>
<i>HPWS (IV)</i>	Delery and Shaw (2001)	15	0.731
<i>Employee Engagement (DV)</i>	Delery and Shaw (2001)	12	0.81
<i>Job Performance (DV)</i>	Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989)	5	0.806
<i>Islamic Work Ethics (Mod.)</i>	Ali, (1992)	17	0.846

Source: Authors’ elaboration

#### 3.3.5. Control Variables

Previous research suggests that demographics such as age, gender, experience, education, and salary significantly influence job performance and satisfaction. In this research, the demographic variables used are gender, age, experience, and marital status. Through a one-way ANOVA test, it has been observed that the results for gender, age, experience, education, and marital status are significant, with p-values of 0.02 and 0.055, respectively. The results for experience and marital status are insignificant. Therefore, the variables of gender, age, experience, education, and marital status are controlled in this result to examine the actual outcomes.

**Table 7.** Summary of Control Variables

<i>S#</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>Control Variables</i>
<i>1</i>	Employee Engagement	Gender, Education, Age, Experience, Marital Status
<i>2</i>	Job Performance	Gender, Education, Age, Experience, Marital Status

Source: Authors’ elaboration



### 3.3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

The study investigates the impact of high-performance Work systems (HPWS) on employee job engagement and performance, with a moderating role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE). Data was collected from universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. The research aims to help organizations enforce justice in the workplace, such as employee duties, remuneration, wages, recruitment, promotions, and social responsibilities. This will enhance employee performance and nurture their skills at work. Management should also conduct training programs that adhere to Islamic work ethics. The research highlights the importance of generosity and justice in promoting employee welfare.

## 4. Result Analysis

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The table below presents the descriptive statistics of the Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of the data. The values are as follows: High Performance Work System (HPWS), Mean = 3.595, S.D. = 0.809; Islamic Work Ethics (Moderator), Mean = 2.879, S.D. = 0.741; Employee Job Engagement (EJE), Mean = 2.270, S.D. = 0.786; and Employee Job Performance, Mean = 4.041, S.D. = 0.609. Whereas the Skewness and Kurtosis values also explain the perfect values, as the values are close to zero.

**Table 8.** Descriptive Analysis

(N=318)									
Variables	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
IWE	318	1.00	5.00	2.879	0.741	-.088	.137	.014	.273
EJE	318	1.00	5.00	2.270	0.786	.754	.137	.684	.273
EJP	318	1.57	5.00	4.041	0.609	-.579	.137	.942	.273
HWPS	318	1.00	5.00	3.595	0.809	-.379	.137	.098	.273

Source: Authors' elaboration

### 4.2. Correlation Analysis

A statistical mechanism is typically used to determine the degree of association between two variables. It determines the connections among different variables. It examines the nature of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. In the view of Zhan et al. (2005) the correlation index, it is used to measure the strength of the relationship among different variables. The range of the correlation index (r) typically spans from -1 to +1. The Pearson correlation matrix explains the significance, direction, and potential of the correlation among the variables. There is a perfect correlation among the variables of the study when the correlation index equals 1. Conversely, when the correlation index equals 0, it means that there is no correlation among the variables. The Pearson correlation table shows that all the direct variables have a significant positive relationship.

The table below shows the correlation analysis of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. HPWS and employee job performance have a strong and positive relationship, with a correlation coefficient of .412 and a p-value of less than 0.01. The other relationships, such as HPWS, have a significant relationship with Employee Job Engagement (r = .197\*\*). All the values show a positive and strong relationship, with less than 8, indicating that no Multicollinearity issue was found in the data. For the assessment of Multicollinearity, another test was run, which identified that the values of VIF are within the range suggested by different researchers.

To assess potential multicollinearity among predictors, variance inflation factors (VIF) and tolerance values were calculated. All VIF values were below 5, and all tolerance values exceeded 0.2, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern. These results confirm that the predictors HPWS, Islamic Work Ethics (IWE), and their interaction terms contribute unique variance to the regression models, supporting the validity and reliability of the estimated relationships.



**Table 9.** Correlation

(N=318)						
Variables	SD	Reliability	1	2	3	4
<i>IWE</i>	0.741	.846	1			
<i>EJE</i>	0.786	.855	.379**	1		
<i>HPWS</i>	0.609	1.232	.432**	.197**	1	
<i>EJP</i>	0.809	.806	.321**	.258**	.412**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed) n=318						

Source: Authors' elaboration

### 4.3. Regression Analysis

#### 4.3.1 Moderation Regression Analysis

Moderation analysis talks about the strength of the relationship that either the moderator strengthens or weakens the relationship.

**Table 10.** Moderation Regression Analysis

Predictor	Employee Job Engagement			Job Performance		
	B	R2	ΔR2	β	R2	ΔR2
<i>Step I</i>						
<i>Control Variable</i>		.006			.004	
<i>Step II</i>						
<i>HPWS</i>	.185***	.042	.036***	.309***	.170	.166***
<i>IWE</i>	.398***	.145	.139***	.262**	.105	.101***
<i>Step III</i>						
<i>Interaction</i>	-.035n.s	.147	.001	-.030n.s	.197	.001
*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (1-tailed) **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), ***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed) n=318, ns=none significant						

Source: Authors' elaboration

The above table of regression analysis reveals that the independent variable, High Performance Work System (HPWS),  $\beta = 0$ , has a significant relationship with employee job engagement ( $\beta .185$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Based on the results, we accepted the hypothesis stated as “High Performance Work System has a significant relationship with Employee Job Engagement” is accepted. The table also shows that the independent variable, i.e., High-Performance Work System, with the other dependent variable, i.e., Employee Job Performance, has values ( $\beta = .309$ ,  $p < .001$ , Significant) that meet the significance criteria, so we accept the hypothesis. The above result shows that IWE has a direct influence on employee engagement ( $B = 98$ ,  $\Delta R^2 p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .139$ ). It can be said that the third hypothesis, “Islamic Work ethics has a direct relationship with Employee Engagement,” is supported by the result. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis “Islamic Work ethics has a direct relationship with job Performance” is also supported by the results (Beta=.262,  $P \leq .01$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .101$ ).

The moderation analysis was tested with an interaction term, as shown in the above regression table, and revealed an insignificant relationship with our dependent variable (Employee Job Engagement), with a Beta value of  $-.035$  (n.s.) and the interaction term. So the results do not support our moderation-related hypothesis. Similar to the other dependent variable (Employee Job Performance) and interaction term, which also reveal a beta value of  $-.030$ , n.s., indicating that it does not



support the hypothesis, as per the guidelines of different researchers. Although moderation was not statistically supported, this outcome suggests that IWE may function more as a direct predictor rather than a contextual moderator. This finding highlights the need to further explore boundary conditions and cultural contexts in future research.

**Table 10.** Moderation Regression Analysis

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Hypothesis 1.</i>	HPWS is positively related with the employee engagement	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 2.</i>	HPWS is positively related with the job performance	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 3.</i>	Islamic Work ethics has direct relationship with Employee Engagement	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 4.</i>	Islamic Work ethics has direct relationship with job Performance	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 5.</i>	The relationship of HPWS and Job Engagement is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics in a way that this positive relationship is strong when Islamic Work Ethics is high	Not Supported
<i>Hypothesis 6.</i>	The relationship of HPWS and Job performance is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics in a way that this positive relationship is strong when Islamic Work Ethics is high	Not Supported

Source: Authors' elaboration

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Discussion of Hypothesis

The first hypothesis (HPWS is positively related to employee engagement) is supported by the above results, and past studies also support the above results. According to Snape and Redman (2010), based on social exchange theory, with the help of HPWS, organizations support employee development by enhancing employees' job skills, enriching jobs, and encouraging the active participation of employees in the decision-making process, and employees act reciprocally in job engagement and become loyal towards work and organization and take initiatives to problem solving. The recent studies suggest that the social exchange relationship between employee engagement and HPWS also find in the international context, on the base of social exchange theory, the effective execution of HPWS create feelings and emotions in the mind of employees which contributes to organization in the international context as Chinese culture based on highly collectivistic culture and group-oriented Chinese employees are motivated to work hard for the company and for the collective good as to get mutual benefit (Hofstede, 1984). When HRM practices are applied fairly within the organization, it creates a positive relationship between employees and the organization's management. The rich and positive connection between employees and management will motivate employees to increase their performance, as they will consider themselves important to the organization (Moazzezi et al., 2014). Employees should be considered as a source of dynamic and powerful workforce assets because they are not just the servants of the organization; they are valuable assets as well.

The second hypothesis (HPWS is positively related to job performance) is supported by the above results, and past studies also support this result. Jex et al. (2003) defined job performance as "all the behaviors that employee engage at their work". According to Mahmood et al. (2014) the implementation of fair HRM practices in organizations always motivates employees to perform their duties more honestly and effectively. They become committed towards the organization and their job performance increases. The fair execution of HPWS in the terms of fair compensation and training and development, employees become committed towards an organization because they receive growth in the career, learning opportunities and advancements and they perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. When HRM practices are applied fairly within the organization, it creates a positive relationship between employees and the organization's management. The rich and positive connection between employees and management will motivate employees to increase their performance, as they will consider themselves important to the organization (Moazzezi et al., 2014). Employees should be considered as a source of dynamic and powerful workforce assets because they are not just the servants of the organization; they are valuable assets as well. HPWS in the form of HRM practices has a direct relationship with job performance because fair incentive plans based on fair performance appraisal reports, salary enhancements, bonuses, and rewards are useful strategies to motivate employees and reassure them that they are important to the organization and that the organization cares about them. In this way, employees become committed and satisfied, which in turn leads to increased performance (Altarawmneh & Al-Kilani, 2010).



The third hypothesis (Islamic Work Ethics has a direct relationship with Employee Engagement) is also supported by the above results. According to Sadozia (2013), a positive relationship is found between Islamic Work Ethics and employee commitment in the form of work engagement because Islamic Work Ethics develops a positive image in the mind of employees that the organization uses fair practices and ethics in the organizational operations, such as compensation, promotions, appraisal, and performance evaluations. They develop a positive attitude, and in turn, they become committed to the work and work honestly. When employees perceive that they are not treated ethically according to Islamic principles and organization is not treating their employees fairly then they look for opportunities in their own way and they conduct unethical behavior in the workplace to balance the injustice due to which they are unable to fully concentrate on their tasks and assigned duties and their performance goes down as they waste their most of time in conflicting with the organization for unfair treatment and injustice (Linda K Treviño et al., 2006). The Quran says, “word of thy Lord both finds its fulfillment in truth and in justice; none can change His words” (Quran 6:115).

Similarly, the fourth hypothesis (Islamic Work ethics has a direct relationship with job performance) is also supported by the above results. According to Debeljak et al. (2008) “Islamic work ethics is a direction towards work and approaches work as a valuable asset in human lives.” Islamic work ethics have a direct relationship with the job performance of employees (Jalil et al., 2010).

According to Abdul Jalil and Abdul Rahman (2010) when organizations use Islamic work ethics in their operations, it helps in the satisfaction of employees, and they become more committed and loyal, due to which their job performance increases as they are motivated that they are treated according to Islamic principles. There is a strong relationship between ethics-related outcomes and perceived general fair treatment within an organization (Linda Klebe Treviño & Weaver, 2001). When employees perceive that they are not treated ethically according to Islamic principles and organization is not treating their employees fairly then they look for opportunities in their own way and they conduct unethical behavior in the workplace to balance the injustice due to which they are unable to fully concentrate on their tasks and assigned duties and their performance goes down as they waste their most of time in conflicting with the organization for unfair treatment and injustice (Linda K Treviño et al., 2006). According to Robbin (2005), job satisfaction refers to the emotional states individuals experience towards their jobs. This implies that an employee with a high job satisfaction level will have a more positive attitude toward their job and vice versa. Islamic work ethics and job satisfaction are closely related, and research studies also support the fact that Islamic work ethics have a positive impact on both employee satisfaction and organizational performance. (Yousef, 2001; Vitell and Davis, 1990). The fifth hypothesis (the relationship between HPWS and Job Engagement is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics, such that this positive relationship is stronger when Islamic Work Ethics is high) is not supported by the results. Pakistan has weak economic conditions, and employees are more focused on the good salaries and remuneration instead of recognition and training and development, and that is the reason they do not give more attention to ethics, because they try hard to find the means for getting a salary, specifically in educational institutes, as most of the teachers are contract-based. Secondly, this sample size is not enough for this model, and it cannot analyze the results effectively. According to Baker, Hunt, and Andrews (2006) “we have lost the distinction between what is legal and what is illegal, and also don’t know about ethics. No one hates people who get their money through illegal means. Society is not acting as a restraint”. This unexpected finding suggests that in resource-constrained contexts, financial and contractual considerations may outweigh the ethical or religious drivers of engagement. Future research should disentangle these contextual effects.

Similarly, the sixth hypothesis (The relationship of HPWS and Job Engagement is moderated by Islamic Work Ethics in a way that this positive relationship is strong when Islamic Work Ethics is high) is also not supported by the results. Pakistan is an Islamic country, and HRM practices in the educational sector already include some elements of ethics in implementing these practices. When researchers try to use Islamic work ethics as a moderator, it becomes part of HRM practices and acts as an independent variable instead of moderating the relationship of HRM practices with job satisfaction, due to which hypothesis 6 is not supported.

Although the moderation analysis did not support the hypothesized role of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) in strengthening the relationship between HPWS and employee engagement/performance, several factors may explain this result. First, employees in the sampled organizations may already perceive high baseline levels of ethical practices, leaving limited variability for moderation to manifest. Second, cultural or organizational norms in Rawalpindi and Islamabad may influence how employees interpret HPWS and IWE, potentially reducing the observable moderating effect. Third, measurement limitations or overlapping constructs between IWE and employee engagement could attenuate the moderation. These considerations suggest that while IWE is theoretically important, its moderating role may be context-dependent or require more precise operationalization in future research.



The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) impact employee engagement and performance, as well as the interaction between Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) and these processes. Consistent with social exchange theory, employees perceive supportive HR practices as signals of organizational investment, which fosters engagement and discretionary effort. However, the lack of significant moderation by IWE suggests that the influence of ethical values may be context-dependent or potentially saturated among the sampled employees. These insights extend prior research by emphasizing that while HPWS are broadly effective, the alignment of organizational practices with employees' ethical frameworks may vary in impact across different cultural or organizational contexts. Moreover, the study highlights practical implications for HR managers, indicating that combining high-performance practices with ethical considerations can enhance engagement and performance, but the moderating effect of ethics may not be uniform across all settings

### *5.2 Managerial Implications*

This research underscores the significance of incorporating Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) into organizational practices to boost employee satisfaction, engagement, and job performance. The findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between IWE and both employee job satisfaction and performance, underscoring that ethical and fair treatment is critical in fostering commitment and motivation.

From a practical standpoint, organizations, regardless of size, can benefit from incorporating IWE principles into HRM policies. Managers are encouraged to implement transparent appraisal systems, ensure fair workload distribution, design ethics-based training programs, and maintain justice and generosity in matters such as recruitment, promotions, compensation, and social responsibilities. Aligning HR practices with employees' ethical expectations not only enhances engagement and performance but also strengthens organizational legitimacy and sustainability.

For policymakers, the study suggests revising workplace regulations and ethics guidelines to reflect Islamic ethical principles, thereby promoting a culture of fairness, responsibility, and respect in organizational settings. These measures bridge the gap between theory and practice by translating the insights on HPWS and IWE into actionable strategies that improve both employee well-being and organizational outcomes, fostering a high-performing and ethically grounded workplace.

### *5.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

The study collects data from private colleges in Rawalpindi, using convenience sampling. The cross-sectional nature of the sample makes it challenging to generalize the results and draw causal inferences. Future studies should consider other organizational behaviors, such as performance, locus of control, turnover intentions, and citizenship behavior.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study examines the impact of High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) on Employee Job Engagement (EJE) and Job Performance, with Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as a potential moderator. Data were collected via a self-administered questionnaire from 318 employees in Pakistan's education sector using a convenience sampling approach. The results indicate that HPWS significantly enhances both employee engagement and job performance, while IWE also exerts a positive and significant direct effect. However, the hypothesized moderating role of IWE was not supported in this context.

These findings provide practical insights for the education sector and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of implementing fair and ethical HRM practices to improve employee outcomes. The study also contributes theoretically by integrating HPWS, job engagement, and IWE, thereby extending understanding of how ethical frameworks interact with high-performance HR systems. Limitations include reliance on cross-sectional, single-source data, suggesting that future research could adopt longitudinal designs, explore additional outcomes, or examine other sectors to validate and extend these findings.

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