

Nottingham Trent University

**The influence of HRM system strength on employee Affective
Commitment and OCB: the role of HR Climate, Organisational
Justice, and Trust**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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In the name of Allah, the most beneficial and most merciful.

“And He is with you, wherever you are.” – Quran (57:4)

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Abstract

Traditional HRM studies have primarily focused on HR content, HR practices, or bundles of HR practices to elucidate the black box in HRM and outcome debate. This research extends existing knowledge by shifting the focus to the HR process or the strength of the HRM system, rather than HR content alone. The strength of the HRM system, encompassing its distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, sends signals to employees to interpret the purposes of HR content shared among them, thereby leading to the intended employee outcomes.

The objective of this research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to examine the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcomes, including affective commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB). Secondly, the research posits that the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee reactions is mediated by HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust, in sequence. This study investigates the interplay between the strength of the HRM system and employee behaviours in Pakistani organisational settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research framework is developed on the assumption that the existence of a strong HRM system, characterized by distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus regarding HR content, will foster a clearer understanding of the purposes behind HR content implementation in an organisation (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). This shared understanding, termed as HR Climate, further influences perceptions of justice in the organisation, thereby fostering emotional bonds and trust in the employer, subsequently affecting employee affective commitment and OCB.

To address the research objectives, the study adopts a postpositivist epistemology and quantitative methodology through survey instruments. Data were collected from a sample of 311 employees across various departments in the main operational site of a large manufacturing organisation in Pakistan, including senior managers, line managers, and non-managerial employees. The data were analysed using regression analysis and the Hayes PROCESS tool in SPSS.

The findings of the study support the assumptions made. The study reveals that the strength of the HRM system has direct and combined predictive value on both employee outcomes (affective commitment and OCB). However, consensus does not influence affective

commitment, while consistency and consensus both fail to encourage OCB among employees. Moreover, the research finds that HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust, in sequence, partially mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and affective commitment, while fully mediating the relationship with OCB. Additionally, the findings suggest that trust is the most significant construct in this sequential mediation relationship, influencing and encouraging affective commitment and OCB among employees.

The research contributes to the existing HRM literature by shedding light on the mysterious link in the black box phenomena. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first to explore the serial mediation of HR climate, justice, and trust between HRM system strength and employee relations in the Pakistani context during COVID-19. Furthermore, the study provides valuable insights into the social-exchange norms associated with the relationship of justice-trust-employee behaviour that emerged in the research findings.

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1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to topic

Human resource (HR) researchers have conducted extensive studies, published numerous books, peer-reviewed articles, and meta-analyses to develop an understanding of how HR practices in organisations can lead to various outcomes (i.e Wright and Nishi, 2007; Macky and Boxall, 2008; Frenkel et al., 2012a; Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015). The primary objective of organisations is to utilize HR practices, policies, and activities to effectively manage employees and achieve organisational goals. This raises important questions: How can organisational goals be achieved through HR practices? Which practices are most likely to result in specific outcomes? Is there a need for a linking variable in this relationship? To comprehend this concept, numerous studies have examined the association and relationship between HR practices and organisational outcomes. Despite the efforts made by HR scholars, several aspects of this relationship remain unclear, and human resource management (HRM) studies have yet to fully uncover and explore these connections with strong conviction. This elusive link in the causal chain is often referred to as the black-box phenomenon.

To unbox this phenomenon, the researchers are investigating the HRM side, the outcome side, and the linkage in between. Considering the outcome side of the black box first, in general, there are two types of organisational outcomes, proximal and distal. Proximal outcomes are the short-term results and consequences that are associated with individuals, while distal outcomes refer to long-term results or outcomes that are more linked with the whole organisation (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015; Guest, 2007). Studies that have focused on distal outcomes have examined the association between HR practices and business performance (Katou and Budhwar, 2006), financial performance (Huselid, 1995; Guest, 1997), economic productivity (Wall and Wood, 2005), service quality (Chuang and Liao, 2010) and numerous other organisational outcomes. Studies that have focused on proximal outcomes have examined the link between HR practices and employee attitudes and behaviours, such as affective commitment (Rubel et al., 2017), job performance (Nishii et al., 2008),

employee satisfaction (Katou, 2013), employee well-being (Kahoe and Wright, 2013) turnover intention (Zhang and Agarwal, 2009) and many more.

Some scholars have suggested that employee-related outcomes or proximal outcomes can develop favourable conditions that could affect organisational outcomes or distal outcomes (Jiang et al., 2013; Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015; Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015). Organisations that focus on individuals and their outcomes can achieve more benefits, as positive employee outcomes will encourage and influence productivity thus, benefitting both individuals and the organisation. For instance, HRM and performance model by Wright and Nishii, (2007) suggests that HRM (intended, actual, and perceived HR practices) impact proximal outcomes (employee reactions) which in turn influence the distal outcome (organisational performance). Similarly, the research model by Guest, (1997) also highlights that organisational performance and financial outcomes are influenced by employee behavioural outcomes. Although a distal outcome may be more attractive to the employer, it can only be achieved if the focus is first given to the proximal outcomes.

Therefore, the proximal and distal outcome debate implies that HR practices are more aligned to proximal outcomes (employee-related outcomes) than distal outcomes (organisational-related outcomes). To understand HRM and outcome relationships or to unbox the black box, the focus should be given to the proximal outcomes rather than distal outcomes. There remain many areas that have not been explored in the HRM and employee outcome relationships with strong conviction. Therefore, researchers call for future studies to test the relationship between HRM and proximal outcomes (Guest, 1997; Wright and Boswell, 2002; Sanders et al., 2014). Thus, employee affective commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) are the two types of proximal outcomes or employee-related outcomes that are tested, examined, and discussed in this research.

Affective commitment and OCB as two employee outcomes that could benefit both individuals and organisations. Affective commitment is emotional attachment and association towards the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1991) which in turn affects the organisation at large. While, OCB are discretionary and voluntary behaviours, that are neither part of employees' job roles nor are explicitly required by the organisation as part of their job duties (Organ, 1988). Such behaviours are not formally rewarded by the organisation but overall have the potential to enhance the organisation's

environment and performance. Researchers are interested in affective commitment and OCB because these two constructs stem from the belief that these employee behaviours can enhance organisational effectiveness and performance. So, researchers try to observe and identify antecedent conditions that can develop employee commitment and OCB which in the long run can contribute to organisational performance. This research has also selected these two employee behaviours as dependent variables for several reasons, which are further discussed and justified in the literature review chapter of this thesis.

In HRM and outcome debates, scholars are not only discussing the employee outcome side of the relationship but are also discussing the HRM side of a relationship. The literature on HRM indicates that there are two fundamental approaches, where 1) HRM is viewed as the best practice and 2) HRM is seen as the best fit in the relationship between HRM and employee outcome. The best practice approach for HRM assumes that HR practices whether as a single or bundle of practices are independent of the context through which it can influence, improve, and maximise the outcomes. Examples of best practices as a bundle of HR practices are High-performance work system (HPWS) (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015; Riaz et al., 2021) Hi involvement HRM (Wood and de Menezes, 2011), and High commitment HRM (Kim and Wright, 2011). On the other hand, best fit assumes HR practices are consistent with the context and most suited to the given situation in improving outcomes.

In either case, the leading trend in HRM studies has moved its focus to the HR process-oriented approach, in which rather than investigating the HR content such as HR practices or HPWS, the focus is given to employee perceptions surrounding HR content (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008; Sanders et al., 2008; Cafferkey et al., 2019). In other words, it is the way how practices are communicated to the employees (Li et al., 2011) that they can develop sense-making about those practices (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Wright and Nishii, (2007) argued that the intended purposes of HR content can only be fulfilled depending on how employees shape their perceptions of these practices. If employees do not have a clear idea and understanding about the purposes of HR activities in their organisation, they would consider it irrelevant which would ultimately lead to undesirable employee behaviours. HR process-oriented approach or role of employee perceptions have often been ignored by researchers when conducting field research, although, it is employees' perceptions,

insight, and views about something (HR content) that will lead employees to act upon it in a certain way.

Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) were among the early few scholars who criticised the one-sided focus of HR content and spoke about the negligence of researchers on the significance of communication, attributions, implementation, and HR process surrounding HR content. Therefore, in response to the call from HR process researchers (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008; Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011; Cafferkey et al., 2019) this research has focused on the HR process rather than HR content and examine the relationship between HRM system strength and employee outcomes as areas to focus on to unbox the black box.

The concept of the HRM system strength is based on the assumption that each individual in an organisation will experience the same HR content but may interpret it differently. Therefore, there is a possibility that each employee may not perceive a similar meaning and intended purpose of HR content to obtain a specific goal (i.e., improve efficiency). It is necessary for employees to perceive HR content uniformly and clearly, so they can understand what is expected and required to achieve the intended purpose. Therefore, Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) suggest the necessary features of the HRM system; distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, which will help employees make sense of HR content and allow them to understand the desired response. Distinctiveness refers to HR content being visible, understandable, legitimate, and related to employees' goals (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Consistency means internal consistency or internal alignment among practices (Sanders et al., 2008). Last, consensus relates to the extent to which there is an agreement among HR policymakers (Li et al, 2011). Researchers have often referred to features of the HRM system as 'strength of the HRM system' or 'HRM system strength' (Ostroff and Bowen, 2016; Dello Russo et al.,2018; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). When there is the existence of strength of the HRM system, the likelihood for employees to develop sense-making of HR content in a uniform manner increases (Pereira and Gomes, 2012; Sanders and Yang, 2016), such a situation is referred to as organisational climate by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004). This will serve as an intermediate variable between HRM system strength and, positive employee behaviours (Sanders et al., 2008), and organisational performance.

The climate is generally considered as shared or commonly held perceptions and views about the organisation (Schneider, 1975). Although an organisation may have a general organisational climate, various types of climates may co-exist at the same time in the given context, such as psychological climate, or justice climate. Varnali, (2015) suggested that a specific type of climate should be recognised and focused on to develop a meaningful analysis.

This research focuses on facet-specific organisational climate, referred to as Human relation (HR) climate, which is born out of combining organisational climate and HRM (Varnali, 2015). HR climate is referred to as shared employees' interpretations and meanings of the HR policies, practices, and programs (Arthur and Boyles, 2007). It is also viewed as employees' clear and coherent understanding of HR messages embedded in HR practices that are posited by employee satisfaction towards HR content (Kinnie et al., 2005; Katou, 2013). Therefore, HR climate provides a theoretical bridge to understanding the signalling effect (*HRM system strength*) and its impact on various proximal and distal outcomes. Moreover, Varnali, (2015) suggests that further understanding of this concept is needed and required due to the limited amount of research available.

In sum, in this research the idea of the strength of the process-based system was tested and examined, particularly focusing on the signalling mechanism referred to as the strength of the HRM system, and its relationship with employee affective commitment and OCB. In addition, the study examined the HR climate, which originates from the strength of the HRM system, as a mediator between the two points. In order to enhance further understanding, it has been suggested for future studies that additional variables should be added to the model to the HRM system strength and employee outcomes (Li et al, 2011). Therefore, this research has developed a conceptual framework involving a series of three mediators between HRM system strength and employee outcomes. The three mediators HR Climate, organisational justice, and trust in sequence will facilitate the relationship between the strength of HRM systems and employee outcomes. This serial mediation model is an attempt to unveil the mysterious link in this black box phenomenon.

Furthermore, Katou, (2013) stated that employee satisfaction with HR content is an indication of the presence of a strong climate in an organisation, representing that employees have a uniform and clear understanding. Such a situation in an organisation

encourages and fosters perceptions of fairness and justice (Zhang and Agarwal, 2009), which will further facilitate positive employee emotions (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). The relationship of justice with employee outcomes is often viewed under the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), particularly with commitment and OCB (Organ, 1988). The social exchange theory by Blau, (1964) discusses the exchange relationship between two individuals that is based on a long-term and unspecified exchange of intangible goods. Intangible goods include advice, support, acceptance, respect, compliance, and so on. According to the social exchange theory, when employees perceive their organisation as fair, supportive, and rewarding, they feel in debt to the organisation and feel obliged to reciprocate by exhibiting gratitude and positive behaviours (Colquitt et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2015).

Blau, (1964) discusses the significance of trust in the social exchange linked with organisational justice and stated that “since there is no way to assume an appropriate return for a favour, the social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations” (1964:94). As there is no formal contract made between the two parties, so it is not necessary that one have to reciprocate with acceptance and compliance in exchange of the benefits received. Therefore, social exchange promotes that trust is essential and necessary for an exchange relationship between justice and employee outcomes. Moreover, Cropanzano and Mitchell, (2005) claimed that trust is the promising mechanism between justice and employee-related outcomes. However, fewer studies have examined the relationship between justice and employee outcome through trust (DeConinck, 2010), particularly when justice originates from climate, and climate originates from the strength of the HRM system. To this date, there are very few studies that have linked these three variables together, and to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this research is the first to be conducted in the Pakistani manufacturing organisational context during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, drawing on the context of the HRM system strength studies (Sanders et al., 2008; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020), which has largely focused on the specific type of industries (service sector) and, European cultural context. This study extends knowledge by addressing another type of industrial sector (manufacturing industry) and Pakistani cultural settings (consists of collectivist culture, high-power distance).

In sum, the study **believes** that HR content and HR process are the two separate faces of the HRM system. Each aspect has shown different effects on employee behaviours,

in particular, the HR process has shown a stronger influence on employee behaviours rather than HR content (Katou, 2013). HR process is referred to as the ‘strength of the HRM system’ or ‘HRM system strength’ (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016; Dello Russo et al., 2018; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). The current study is trying to contribute to the HR process literature by examining the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee affective commitment and OCB during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the study aims to unveil the black box by investigating the potential sequential mediation of HR climate, organisational justice, and trust between the two points.

Thus, the study’s two research questions are represented as follows.

1. Does the strength of the HRM system affect employee affective commitment and OCB?
2. Does HR climate, organisational justice, and trust serially mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system, affective commitment, and OCB?

To address these research questions and the purposes of this research, the study has developed its six aims.

1. To assess whether the strength of the HRM system can influence employee outcomes.
2. To evaluate the relationship between HRM system strength and HR Climate.
3. To evaluate the relationship between HR climate and organisational justice.
4. To evaluate the relationship between organisational justice and organisational trust.
5. To evaluate the relationship between organisational trust and positive employee behaviours (affective commitment and OCB).
6. To explore the role of HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust between HRM system strength and affective commitment and OCB.

1.2 Research context.

The major significance and contributions of this research are based on the conceptual framework created by the researcher using the social exchange theory rather than the context of this study. However, still, it is important to understand the context in any research that is investigating the relationship between HRM and its influence on distal

or proximal outcomes. The context of the study is the private sector employees working in the operational branch of a large-scale manufacturing organisation operating in Pakistan. Pakistan as a developing country is one of the interesting point of view for this research that will be elaborated.

Based on the process framework by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), HR content should be efficiently communicated to employees at the bottom so it can lead to positive employee outcomes. In other words, this means that information is being clearly carried out throughout the organisational level from top to bottom. However, considering the Pakistani culture which has a higher rating of Hofstede, (1983) cultural indicators, such as high-power distance culture and collectivist society (Khilji and Wang, 2006), thereby the flow of information from top to bottom might not be effective. In addition, the norms and values are strongly shared across employees and controlled by an extreme level of cultural tightness. Therefore, Farndale and Sanders (2017) suggest in tight societies such as Pakistan, a strong HRM system might not be able to reinforce employee behaviours and at a certain point the strength of the HRM system may become irrelevant to employees. As this research is using Pakistan's organisation as a context of this study so, this research to some extent will be empirically testing this proposition made by Farndale and Sanders, (2017).

National culture plays an important role, particularly in dealing with employee outcomes (Riaz et al., 2021). Such as employee behaviours and attitudes in Pakistani organisations may be different from those working in Western countries, and one of the reasons for that is the influence of national culture. Pakistan has a collectivist culture, so employees have more interdependence on their colleagues at the workplace or family members at home and typically work together to strive as a group. On the other hand, western cultures are more individualist, and employees are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family in the social framework. Therefore, it was assumed that the strength of the HRM system that pushed shared perceptions among employees might be more effective in fostering employee behaviours in the Western context than in an Eastern context where norms and values are already shared (Farndale and Sanders, 2017). However, there is not enough empirical evidence to prove this proposition, the strength of the HRM system as proposed by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) might be equally or even more effective in Eastern culture than in the Western context. Despite that, the impact of the cultural surroundings is beyond the scope of this research, there is still a need for deeper understanding and empirical

evidence of how the relationship between the HRM system and employee outcome, can bring about change in this context and how.

1.2.1 COVID-19 in Pakistan

Coronavirus disease or COVID-19 is the virus that causes severe respiratory infections in an individual leading to their death. The COVID-19 cases were first reported in the Hubei province of China in December 2019, and as it was a new disease at that time so the cause of death for those cases was unidentifiable. Within a few months, the virus spread to multiple other cities and countries leading to a rise in COVID-19 cases and deaths across the globe. Thus, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed the outbreak of coronavirus disease and declared it a pandemic. As per the current statistic report as of March 2023, there are 761 million cases reported so far globally (World Health Organisation, 2023).

A country like Pakistan, which has a poor healthcare system, only allocates 2% of its budget to the public health sector compared to the 11.6% as a worldwide average, which was at the most risk (World Health Organisation, 2019). The country's inadequate healthcare facilities were one of the major concerns (Rasheed et al., 2021). Healthcare representatives were pleading that with the limited number of resources and facilities, the healthcare sector of Pakistan might collapse (Agency, 2020).

The country faced problems in terms of economic growth as well besides the issue of the limited number of medical facilities. The government of Pakistan implemented a complete lockdown in the country from 23 March to 9 May 2020, causing multiple sectors including educational institutes, businesses, and public transport to close down completely. The employees working in the formal sectors such as white-collar workers enjoyed the benefit and compensation provided by their employers. Employees in the informal sector such as blue-collar employees, street vendors, house help, and daily wagers including labourers working in factories and construction, were left unemployed (Malik et al., 2020). Therefore, industries such as manufacturing, construction, and transportation were massively affected (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2022). This caused economic pressure on low-income employees who were solely dependent on their daily wages.

In addition, Pakistan was in a vulnerable position due to its geographical location. Pakistan shares borders with China and India, which were badly hit by the pandemic during the year 2020. As a result, the government of Pakistan's government understood

the need for quick strategic planning to control the situation in the country. A smart lockdown scheme was launched by the government back in Feb 2020, in which the area that reported the highest number of cases was put into lockdown to avoid the spread of the virus (Rasheed et al., 2021). According to the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation, and Coordination of Pakistan, a “national action plan” was drawn to control the virus. The objective of this plan was to strengthen the emergency services so timely responses can be made. Another initiative was taken by the government to help daily wagers who were out of jobs due to COVID-19 by engaging them in the “10 billion tree tsunami programme” and paying them on a daily basis to plant trees as part of the programme. This was a very effective use of human capital and monetary resources to assist the community and prepare to cope with another form of threat, “climate change” (World Economic Forum, 2020). These initiatives helped the government of Pakistan to control waves of virus and reduced the number of deaths compared to other neighbouring countries including India, China, and Iran where the situation was worsened.

1.2.2 The manufacturing sector of Pakistan

Pakistan is considered a developing economy but even during pre-covid times, it has struggled to achieve high economic growth as compared to its South Asian neighbours (India, and Bangladesh). According to World Bank, (2013), low labour productivity is one of the reasons for the slow growth in Pakistan. The manufacturing sector is the backbone of Pakistan’s economy (Ambreen et al., 2019), and more focus and improvements are needed in this sector to foster economic growth (Nawaz et al., 2014) (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

The manufacturing sector in Pakistan contributes to 12.4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2022). Pakistan's national account captures manufacturing sectors into three different types: large-scale manufacturing, small-scale manufacturing, and slaughtering. According to the survey report published by the Ministry of Finance of Pakistan (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2022), in the financial year 2021-2022, large-scale manufacturing accounts for 9.2% of the GDP and 74.3% of the sector share. Small-scale manufacturing contributes to 2% of GDP and 15.9% of the sector share while slaughtering accounts for 1.2% of GDP and 9.7% sector share.

Organisation performance and production in large-scale manufacturing were badly impacted by COVID-19 in the year 2020 and the growth rate declined to -4.29% (see Figure 1-2). Industries in Pakistan faced a slowdown in business activities and performance, in particular, due to the disturbance in the supply chain and lockdown during the pandemic. Figure 1-1 shows a sharp decline in the growth rate and Quantum index of large manufacturing industries (QIM) from Feb 2020 to September 2020 when COVID-19 was at its peak. The closure of factors and manufacturing plants leads to a rise in redundancies and unemployment. According to the COVID-19 survey report published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics(a), (2021), four industries in Pakistan were most affected in terms of job loss due to COVID-19, including the manufacturing industry, construction industry, transport & retail trade, and storage & wholesale. Workers in the manufacturing sector were reported the second highest to be affected (72%) in terms of a job loss or decrease in income. The sharp decline in the country's economic growth and industrial growth was due to the sudden closure of the manufacturing and construction sectors. However, the manufacturing industry later showed resilience and improved in the years 2021 and 2022. The growth rate of the large-scale manufacturing sector rose to 4.24% and 10.4% in the financial years 2021 and 2022 (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2022).

According to the Pakistan Economic Survey, (2022), electrical equipment products weigh 2.05 in the Quantum index of large manufacturing industries (QIM) in Pakistan. QIM measures the changes in the production of large-scale manufacturing industries over time. The production of electrical equipment has not improved as compared to other products in the large-scale manufacturing sector of the country such as textiles (18.16 QIM), chemicals (6.48 QIM), and pharmaceuticals (5.15 QIM). In addition, it is one of the manufacturing industries that has faced a major decline in production during and after the COVID-19 period. According to the report by the Pakistan Economic Survey, (2022) the electrical equipment production sector witnessed a decline in the growth rate of -17% in the financial year of 2020-2021 and -1% in the financial year 2021-2022 compared to other products which recovered and improved their growth rate.

The participating organisation belongs to the manufacturing sector of Pakistan and is privately owned. It is a large-scale organisation, which has a diverse business portfolio. Its main business is to produce affordable and durable electronic products for customers. Other fields that this organisation is operating in are tiles manufacturing,

motors and metals, power and energy generation, software development, technology solutions, and e-commerce. As explained before electrical equipment production sector in Pakistan experienced a massive decline in growth after COVID-19, this raises several questions regarding the organisations' HR policies and practices adopted in this sector. HR practices that enhance employee skills, efficiency, and productivity can improve the working conditions and social working environment in an electrical manufacturing organisation. A high-performance work system (HPWS) can be very effective in improving the working environment and productivity. This system consists of multiple HR practices such as rewards, training, development, and management of employees, which can increase the chance for an employee to do their job better and indulge in positive behaviours. This system contradicts the Tayloristic and control-based management style which is a very commonly adopted HRM approach in Pakistani organisations (Ahmad et al., 2019). The next section discusses HRM in Pakistan and the usage of a high-performance work system (HPWS) in Pakistani organisations.

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Figure 1-1. Manufacturing sector of Pakistan, Quantum Index of Manufacturing = QIM, Year-on-year basis growth = YoY. Source Pakistan economic survey, (2022).

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Figure 1-2: Growth rate of large-scale manufacturing sector Of Pakistan. Source: Pakistan economic survey, (2022).

1.2.3 HRM In Pakistan

As noted, before, Pakistan has a higher rating of Hofstede, (1983) cultural indicators, and factors, such as corruption and deference to seniors, are strong national characteristics (Ahmad et al., 2019). The management style in Pakistani organisations is shaped by the national environment and is viewed as bureaucratic, directive, and controlling. However, a transition has recently been taking place in the value system of Pakistani organisations, particularly in the private sector. According to Riaz et al., (2021), Pakistani organisations have a scattergun approach, as few organisations will follow traditional HR practices, such as using unfair procedures to recruit employees like nepotism, while others may use valid and merit base hiring systems. Few studies indicate that organisations in Pakistan are less open to information sharing with employees (Khilji and Wang, 2006), while some organisations prefer and encourage employee participation (Miah and Bird, 2007). In some organisations, line managers are following the cultural norms for the use of HR practices and policies, while in others, they are abiding by the norms of strategic HRM to improve productivity. HRM in Pakistani organisations is going through a developmental phase, and there is a limited number of studies that have focused on the outcomes of implementing modern HR (i.e., HPWS, HCHRM) in the Pakistani context (Khan et al., 2014).

1.2.3.1 High-performance work system in Pakistani organisations

As previously noted, HRM best practices such as HPWS assume that HRM and context are mutually independent in order to improve organisational outcomes (Katou et al., 2014). Thus, it can be assumed that HPWS can be applied in any geographical and industrial context (Martin-Alcazar et al., 2005). However, Pakistan's national culture is strongly influenced by Islamic values (Riaz et al., 2021), the role of religion in

management is very prominent and has recently been studied in HRM research conducted in Pakistan (Mehllahi and Budhwar, 2010; Ahmend and Allen, 2014). Although the concept of HPWS was developed and evolved in the western context and is different from the philosophical foundation of the Islamic model of HRM practices, they do not contradict (Ali, 2010). In fact, in many examples, the principles of HPWS converge with the Islamic concept of management (Abuznaid, 2006; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Mehllahi and Budhwar, 2010; Ahmend and Allen, 2014). Therefore, the role of religion in Pakistan's organisational management system might encourage and foster the usage of HPWS.

The participating organization has adopted a modern HR approach (high-performance work system) to manage its employees and improve performance and efficiency. While this research observes HPWS as given and investigates the perceptions surrounding HR content (*HR process or HRM system strength*), it does not deny the relevance and significance of HR content. HPWS is an important construct in influencing employee outcomes but, in order to develop a greater understanding and insight into the HRM system strength concept, the HR content should be controlled in the HR process model (Farndale and Sanders, 2017). As noted before, this study does not investigate the direct effect of HPWS (*HR content*) on employee outcomes: affective commitment and OCB, instead, it focuses on the HR process and system strength to unbox the black box. This notion and concept of the strength of the HRM system are further discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis.

1.3 Why is this research being conducted?

This research is undertaken to address numerous knowledge gaps identified in the HR literature, thereby making significant and diverse contributions to the field of HRM. Firstly, the research addresses the issue of the black-box phenomenon, which has been extensively discussed in HRM literature, prompting calls for further research to elucidate this phenomenon. Both empirical and theoretical studies have been dedicated to various areas in an attempt to shed light on this phenomenon. To comprehend the concept of the black-box, a majority of studies have focused on individual HR practices or strategic HRM practices such as High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) or High Commitment Human Resource Management (HCHRM), and their relationships with different organizational outcomes.

While the majority of empirical studies have identified a positive influence of a bundle of HRM practices on employees (e.g., Macky and Boxall, 2008), some scepticism remains (Wood and Wall, 2007). Despite the consistent attention given to this concept, numerous empirical and theoretical research endeavours have failed to fully grasp the processes through which HRM impacts outcomes. One often-neglected explanation is the HR process-oriented approach and its potential impact on employee outcomes. The HR process approach revolving around attribution, communication and employee perceptions regarding HR content, can assist researchers to get inside the 'black-box' of HPWS paradigm (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2013). Thus, this thesis responds to calls made by process researchers such as Cafferkey and Dundon, (2013), Katou et al., (2013), Ostroff and Bowen, (2016), Cafferkey et al., (2019), and Heffernan et al., (2022) for more studies to pay attention to the HR process-oriented approach in understanding the black-box phenomenon.

Secondly, the thesis aims to delve deeper into Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) developed a process-oriented approach to elucidate how individuals comprehend HRM practices and how their attributions and understanding of those practices impact their behaviours and attitudes. This thesis extends upon the covariance principle of attribution theory (Kelly, 1973) and social exchange theory in exploring the linkage between HRM system strength and employee outcomes. Moreover, it contributes by investigating the serial mediating properties of HR climate, justice, and trust between HRM system strength and affective commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB).

It is anticipated that HRM system strength will convey clear signals and messages about HR content that are highly distinctive, consistent, and consensual (Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). By furnishing empirical evidence and addressing the research questions, this thesis enriches the discourse on the black-box debate and contributes to the research on HR strength, climate, justice, trust, affective commitment, and OCB collectively. From a practitioner's perspective, this study offers insights to line managers and HR managers to enhance employee behaviours by improving communication regarding the presence and purpose of HR content.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the literature by empirically testing hypotheses within the Pakistani context. While the concept of HR system strength and its impact on employee outcomes has inspired numerous empirical studies, there is a dearth of HRM research that has explored this idea within the Eastern context, particularly in Pakistan.

Consequently, important theoretical and practical insights specific to this context have been overlooked.

Pakistan has often been marginalised as a context within HRM literature (Budhwar and Singh, 2007). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study represents the first research endeavour to investigate this conceptual framework within the Pakistani context. According to existing literature, Pakistan is characterized as a tight society (Farndale and Sanders, 2017) with high power distance (Riaz et al., 2021) and high uncertainty avoidance (Islam, 2012). Its culture is primarily governed by Islamic laws, which also encompass aspects of business life.

Considering cultural and societal norms, Pakistan is perceived as a tight society, and Farndale and Sanders, (2016) suggest that in such cultures, HRM system strength may become irrelevant as employee behaviours are strongly regulated by the extreme level of cultural tightness. Thus, by employing Pakistan as the context of this research, this thesis aims to advance new knowledge regarding how HRM system strength might influence employee behaviours in tight cultures. Moreover, this study responds to authors who have advocated for future research to examine HRM system theories in diverse contexts (Li et al., 2011; de la Russo et al., 2020) to uncover new theoretical and empirical challenges.

Fourthly, another motivation for undertaking this research stemmed from the COVID-19 crisis. The current research was underway when the world was struck by the pandemic. Research endeavours during such times became exceedingly challenging as countries implemented lockdown measures, leading individuals, particularly employees, to grapple with heightened levels of job insecurity, stress, and anxiety due to uncertain future circumstances. With the majority of organisations transitioning to a work-from-home approach for skilled employees who typically worked in office settings, many unskilled labour workers were out of jobs and faced redundancy. Consequently, data collection for this research became markedly challenging under such conditions.

Nevertheless, conducting research during such critical periods holds significant importance for both academics and practitioners. The outcomes of this research can offer valuable guidance and recommendations for HR practitioners to navigate and recover from the COVID-19 crisis and any potential future crises. This study enhances our comprehension of the antecedent conditions of employee attitudes, namely

affective commitment and OCB, enabling practitioners to pinpoint areas necessitating focus for the improvement of employee-related outcomes and to make informed decisions during severe conditions.

Furthermore, the findings of this study make a noteworthy contribution to the HRM literature by testing the conceptual framework amidst the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, no research had been conducted within the context of a pandemic to examine this model. Employee attitudes and behaviours are often highly sensitive to contextual factors (Wright and Nishii, 2007), thus the outcomes of this research can further enrich the theoretical understanding of constructs such as justice and trust. These constructs have demonstrated considerable promise in influencing positive employee attitudes during periods of instability and uncertainty, such as economic crises (see Katou, 2013), and may continue to be effective in the severe conditions of a pandemic. Therefore, by incorporating justice and trust into the research model, this study endeavours to advance theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning their relationships with employee reactions during times of crisis.

Lastly, as explained before Pakistan has faced low economic growth and one of the reasons for that is low labour productivity and performance (World Bank, 2013). This has raised several questions regarding the HR policies and practices implemented in the manufacturing sector. Specifically, how such practices are being communicated to employees, so the intended purposes of those practices are being fulfilled. This research examines the influence of communication and process-oriented approach on employee outcomes in the manufacturing industry aiming to enhance understanding and insight into these dynamics.

1.4 Structure of this thesis

The thesis has been structured into six chapters.

1.4.1 Chapter 1 Introduction.

This chapter introduces the topic and theories related to this research. It discusses the purpose of this research and its research questions, objectives, and aims. The chapters further elaborate on the research context and the impact of environmental challenges (The COVID-19 pandemic) on the context, indicating the need for this research to be conducted.

1.4.2 Chapter 2 literature review

This chapter reviews, explores and discusses the existing literature related to the key variables of the study. It further elaborates the existing theories and models leading to the development of a research conceptual framework. The chapter also details and discusses the research objectives and the hypotheses of the study.

1.4.3 Chapter 3 methodology

This chapter discusses the research's methodology. It justifies and discusses the choices made to conduct this research, including data collection and data analyses. This chapter explains the quantitative approach used to conduct this research and how it has shaped the research findings and results.

1.4.4 Chapter 4 Results

This chapter provides the results of the quantitative analysis of the survey data. The analysis includes descriptive analysis, CFA, Cronbach alpha, various regression analyses, and serial mediation analysis using Hayes PROCESS.

1.4.5 Chapter 5 discussion

This chapter provides a discussion and evaluation of the research results. In addition, it discusses the research findings related to the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

1.4.6 Chapter 6 Conclusion

The last chapter concludes the research. It provides the theoretical contribution of this research and the implications of findings and results. In addition, the chapter discusses the research limitations and recommendations for future studies.

2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research has two-fold, first is to identify the effect of the strength of the HRM system proposed by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), on positive employee behaviours (affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour). The

second purpose is to examine the sequentially mediating role of HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust between the two points.

The chapter begins with the general concept of an independent variable (HRM system strength) and how it has matured over the years. Next, its relationship with two dependent variables (affective commitment and OCB) is discussed, leading to the development of study's first hypotheses. Next, the chapter provides information about HR Climate as the first mediator in the model and its relationship with HRM system strength, leading to the development of the second hypothesis. Moving on, the chapter discusses the general concept of organisational justice, why it is selected as a second mediator of the model, and its relationship with climate, leading to the development of the third hypothesis. Furthermore, the chapter provides general information about organisational trust and why it is selected as the third mediator in the model, its relationship with justice, and employee outcomes leading to the development of fourth and fifth hypotheses. Lastly, a developed argument is provided explaining the serial mediating link of climate, justice and trust between HRM system strength and employee attitudes (commitment and OCB), leading to the development of the sixth hypothesis.

2.2 The concept of HRM system Strength

As noted in the introduction chapter, despite the growing body of reviews, meta-analyses, empirical research, and peer-reviewed articles, the literature still lacks clarity on how HR practices influence organisational performance. The literature suggests that the relationship between HRM and performance is associated with the concept of the black box (Cho et al., 2006; D. Guest, 2011). However, it remains vague in identifying the specific factors and their corresponding outcomes in this relationship (Gerhart, 2005). Guest, (2011) claimed that despite the ongoing research, "we are more knowledgeable but not much wiser" to uncover such a process with a strong conviction.

The leading trend in research on the relationship between HR practices and **outcomes** has moved its concentration from HR content to HR process. HR content is referred to as HR practices and policies through which organisations develop, improve, and utilise their human capital in order to enhance employee and organisational performance (Boselie et al., 2005). The underlying assumption is that HR content would improve employee behaviours (i.e., employee commitment, satisfaction, job performance, and

OCB), which will ultimately enhance organisational performance. HR content is considered either as a single HR practice (training, internal promotion, performance-related pay, employee participation) or bundles of HR practices that are integrated to establish desired employee behaviours in an organisation (Boxall and Macky, 2009; Kim and Wright, 2011; Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015). Examples of the bundle of HR practices are a high-performance work system (Boselie et al., 2005), a high-involvement work system (Wood and Menezes, 2011), and a high-commitment HRM (Farndale et al., 2011). These systems are often categorised under the best practice HRM approach.

On the other hand, the HR process refers “to the way HR policies and practices are communicated to employees” (Li et al., 2011) through which employees develop sense-making and understanding about the purposes of HR content. The works of three studies, namely Bowen and Ostroff (2004), Wright and Nishi (2007), and Nishi et al. (2008), have laid the theoretical groundwork for the emergence of HR process studies. Wright and Nishi (2007) have posited in their process model that the intended outcomes can be altered based on how HR practices are implemented within an organisation, how these practices are communicated to employees, thereby shaping employee perceptions, influencing reactions, and ultimately affecting organizational performance.

Moreover, Nishii et al. (2008) provided a model of HR attributions which elucidates how the relationship between bundles of HR practices and outcomes is filtered through employees' internal attributions regarding the organisation's intentions when formulating and communicating HR practices. These attributions include service quality, employee well-being, cost reduction, and employee exploitation.

Lastly, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) proposed the HRM system strength theory, which argues that HR content should convey signals to employees in the form of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. These signals enable employees to collectively form a clear understanding of HR content and establish a shared climate, which in turn influences employee outcomes. These theories have stimulated the adoption of a new approach aimed at addressing the "black box" issue within HRM Literature. HRM scholars aimed to dig further to understand this framework in which the HRM system strength and HR attribution influence the employee and organisational outcome.

The concept of the HR process entails a psychological phenomenon that emerges within an organisation as employees develop sense-making, insight, and understanding of HR content. Understanding this notion underscores that the effectiveness of HR practices hinges on how employees perceive and interpret these practices (Nishii et al., 2008; Wright and Nishii, 2007). Uncertainty or lack of comprehension regarding the purposes of HR practices within the organisation may lead to their perception as futile and inconsequential, consequently resulting in undesirable employee outcomes. This underscores the importance and relevance of adopting an HR process approach in understanding employee outcomes. Few empirical studies that have adopted this approach have indicated that the HR process has a stronger influence and contributes more to employee proactive and positive behaviours than HR content does (Katou, 2013; Katou et al., 2014). Thereby recent researchers suggest, in order to unbox the black box, future studies should primarily focus on the HR process approach rather than HR content (see, Takeuchi et al., 2007; Nishii et al., 2008; Sanders et al., 2008; Li, Sanders and Frenkal, 2011; Cafferkey et al., 2019; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020).

Employee perceptions have often been given less attention by researchers in empirical studies, although, it is employees' perceptions and views about something (HR practices) that will make them act on it in a certain way. Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) spoke about the negligence of researchers on the significance of communication, attributions, implementation, and HR process surrounding HR practices. Their work regarding the HR process approach is highly influential and is still constantly studied in the field of HR research. This thesis particularly focuses on the system strength theory (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) and has developed a conceptual model based on their theoretical framework.

Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) applied Kelly's attribution theory, (1973) to investigate the role of HR processes. Attribution theory elucidates how employees interpret contextual information to attribute meanings, which subsequently shape their behaviours. In light of this, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) proposed that HR practices should exhibit distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, collectively termed HRM system strength. These attributes serve as contextual cues for employees, facilitating a coherent and unified comprehension of HR practices, thereby influencing employee attitudes and behaviours. In alignment with Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) framework, this study examines HRM system strength by evaluating employee perceptions of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus regarding HR content within the

organisation as given and functioning in the participating organisation. The concepts of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus as features of HR system strength are discussed as follows:

Distinctiveness generally refers to the features that allow HR practices or in this research case, HPWS to stand out in an organisational setting. Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) suggested that features of HR content should be *visible, understandable, legitimate, and relevant to employees' goals* which will allow it to stand out in an organisation thereby capturing the attention and interest of employees. Thus, employees are more likely to attribute HR content to be purposeful (Li et al., 2011). *Visibility* will be high when the majority of employees in their daily activities are exposed to most of the HR practices that exist in an organisation because it increases complexity and allows the set of practices to be more salient (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). At the same time, such HR activities need to be *relevant* and useful to employees. The needs of employees are satisfied if the HR practices are relevant to the organisation's goal as well as to the individual's goals. Moreover, Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) explained that besides communicating the existing HR practices to employees it is also important to explain to them how they work. Thereby, establishing *understandability*, another feature of distinctiveness. If employees can perceive HR practices to be clear and transparent, it can foster the *legitimacy* of the HR decision-makers' authority, thereby avoiding doubts, suspicions, and rumours among employees (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009). Thus, all of these four features will collectively establish a perception of distinctiveness regarding HR content in an organisation.

The second feature of the HR system strength is **Consistency**, which means internal consistency or internal alignment among the set of HR practices (Sanders, et al., 2008). According to Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), consistency is composed of *instrumentality, validity, and consistent HR message*. *Instrumentality* means that employees have a clear idea about the consequences of their behaviours, thereby establishing an unambiguous cause-and-effect relationship. Instrumentality can help develop a predictable working environment, as employees will have a clear understanding of the expected behaviours required by the management and a clear incentive system that rewards employees for achieving those certain behaviours (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). Thus, employees are less likely to experience disappointment and breach of the psychological contract. Moreover, Instrumentality integrated with the relevance of HR practices can enhance motivation in the employee which can further develop the

employee commitment and OCB (Lavelle et al., 2007). *Validity* is mentioned as coherence between what were the intended purposes of HR practices and, what was achieved by those HR practices, (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). The coherence between intended and actual practices will establish the credibility of HR policymakers, which is necessary to influence employee behaviour. *Consistency in HRM messages* means conveying compatibility and stability in the signals sent by HR practices (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Many scholars have stressed creating an HRM system with practices that complement one another and fit well in achieving the organisational goals (Derly and Dotty, 1996; Huselid, 1992). In fact, literature on strategic HRM mentioned it as a horizontal fit, which has coherence between the HRM system and other organisational factors such as High commitment HRM, or the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) model. However, the literature has not found an HRM system that is the perfect fit and has consistency in HRM message but, effectively the majority of the studies indicate that the HPWS or AMO model has been significantly linked with a higher level of commitment, extra-role behaviours (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2014) productivity, and low level of turnover.

Consensus relates to the extent to which there is an *agreement among policymakers* (HR and Line managers) in the way HPWS are implemented (Li, et al., 2011). Agreement between HR policymakers will help to increase the legitimacy and credibility of authorities of the HRM system, mainly because Line and HR managers are supported by senior management (De la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). Hence coherence among different authorities in a single organisation will facilitate acceptance and utilization of HR practices by employees ultimately influencing their behaviours.

In an organisation, the presence of three meta-features (distinctiveness, consistency, consensus), collectively known as HR system strength, establishes a situation wherein the likelihood for employees to develop sense-making in a uniform manner increases (Pereira and Gomes, 2012; Sanders and Yang, 2016). Such a situation in an organisation is termed as organisational climate (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), which facilitates and influences organisational performance. This research has observed facet-specific organisational climate referred to as HR climate. In such cases, employees would have a clearer and coherent understanding of HR content so, they have a clear idea about the kind of attitudes, and behaviours expected, rewarded, and supported by their management to improve organisational performance (Russo et al., 2018). In contrast, when these three features do not exist, it is highly unlikely that

management's intentions and expectations are clear to their employees, thus it would subsequently lead to a weaker HR climate and poorer organisational performance (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). This indicates that features of the HRM system act as a necessary condition for a HR climate to emerge which further influences outcomes.

Since the publication of Bowen and Ostroff (2004), a common trend that has emerged in HRM literature is that researchers conceptualise the climate and strength of the HRM system as a holistic variable when linked with employee or organisational outcomes, rather than as two separate constructs. When employees perceive HR content to be highly distinctiveness, consistent, and consensual known as the strength of the HRM system, it will jointly influence uniform and shared perception in employees thereby establishing a HR climate. But, instead of distinguishing the strength of the HRM system and shared climate as two separate variables, the researchers have often treated them as substitutes for one another. As Ostroff and Bowen, (2016) argued that HRM system studies have often ignored the role of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus in establishing a climate or shared perceptions in employees. Such as White and Bryson, (2013) studied the impact of HR climate on employee behaviours and assumed that more practices mean a stronger climate but did not use the three key features (HR system strength) as an indication of a strong climate. Some scholars argued that the perception of rating the content of practices, such as a higher score of certain HR practices will indicate that there is an existence of a strong climate and then, they further tested its relationship to positive behaviours (Stumpf et al., 2010; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). These procedures indirectly focus on the outcome of the HRM system instead of the strength of the HRM system (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus). However, Sanders et al., (2008) were one of the few to test the HRM system strength framework and observe climate and strength as two separate variables, which was later followed by other researchers such as Li et al., (2011) and Cafferkey et al., (2019).

The theoretical shift in distinguishing between Climate and HRM system strength also led to the development of new measurement scales. Meta-analysis by Bednall et al., (2022) indicates that, the most popular scale used in the HR process studies is Delmott et al., (2012) scale, followed by Frenkel, li and Restubog, (2012a), Frenkel, Restubog and Bednall, (2012b) and Hauff et al., (2017). Other commonly used scales include Coelho et al., (2015) and Guest and Conway, (2011). This thesis has also adopted the

most popular scale developed by Delmott et al., (2012), as other HR process researchers have approved it and considered it to be valid and reliable.

During the year 2014, another common trend observed in the HR process literature was the integration of HR content and HR process, referred to collectively as the HRM system, and the investigation of their relationship with employee outcomes (Katou, 2013). Although HR content constituted the core focus of these articles, scholars were primarily concerned with employee perceptions regarding these practices. Most articles during this period encompassed both perspectives, with some concluding that three features collectively facilitate desired employee behaviours and act as mediators between HR content and organisational performance.

This new narrative of integrating HR content and HR process was founded on the argument by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) that, the HRM system should be effectively designed and administered by defining meta-features of an overall HRM system (HR policies, strategies, content) that can create a strong situation in the form of shared meaning about the content, potentially leading to organizational performance (p.206). Studies such as Katou, (2013) and Katou et al., (2014) investigated the impact of the HRM system (integrated HR content and HR process) on organisational outcomes. Additionally, Sanders and Yang, (2016) identified various patterns in which the HR process interacts with HR content, each pattern yielding different results. Consequently, it can be concluded that each HRM system should be designed while considering specific organisational objectives and the required employee behaviours as determined by the employer.

Besides the HR process being identified as a mediator between HR content and outcome in the majority of the studies (see Sridhar, 2015), fewer studies have also examined the direct relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcome. For instance, the work of Sanders et al., (2008), claimed a positive and a direct influence of the strength of the HRM system on affective commitment. Additionally, Li et al, (2011) identified a strong association of the strength of the HRM system with employee satisfaction and vigor.

Over time, the concept of HRM system strength as articulated by Bowne and Ostroff (2004) has evolved in terms of conceptualisation, measurement, and contextual understanding. Initially introduced in 2004, empirical studies on the HRM system strength framework primarily focused on Western settings, with findings often

generalised to Asia-Pacific countries. However, these studies overlooked contextual factors such as institutional considerations and social norms, which offer unique and significant theoretical and practical perspectives.

Recent researches conducted within the local context of Asia-Pacific countries aims to generate new insights regarding these contextual factors. For instance, Babar et al., (2022) investigated religiosity (individual religious beliefs that motivate individuals at work) as a moderating boundary condition in the relationship between performance appraisal quality and employee performance in Pakistan. Their findings suggest that the strength of the relationship between performance appraisal quality and employee performance is most pronounced in scenarios of high perceived HRM system strength and low religiosity, or conversely, in cases of low perceived HRM system strength and high religiosity. This indicates a compensatory effect between these variables within the Pakistani context.

Another research conducted by Sanders et al., (2024) during the Covid -19 crisis, encompassed data from 15 countries. The study examined how the severity of a crisis and an organisation's reputation, which are factors influencing managers' motivation, on the one hand, and national cultural values of uncertainty avoidance and power distance, which reflect managers' general beliefs, on the other hand, influence the extent to which managers provide distinctiveness, consistency, and consensual information (HR system strength) to employees during times of crisis. The study revealed that the positive effects of crisis severity and organisation's reputation on the employment of HR system strength were stronger in countries categories by high uncertainty avoidance but weaker in those with high power distance. Hence, to offer new insights and understanding regarding the influence of HRM system strength on employee reactions, studies such as that of Li et al., (2011), and Heffernan et al., (2022) suggest the necessity for more empirical research in diverse contexts.

In response to this, the current research is conducted within the Pakistani context during the COVID-19 crisis. Contextual factors play an important role in how HR content is communicated and implemented by managers and subsequently perceived by employees, thus influencing their reactions (Farndale and Sander, 2017). Therefore, the context of this research provides new knowledge and insights into the influence of HRM system strength.

Additionally, to develop insights and understanding of the HR process concept, this thesis does not consider the role of HR content but rather observes the HR process as a predictor of employee behaviours, as previously demonstrated by scholars such as Cafferkey et al. (2019) and Heffernan et al. (2022). This study primarily focuses on the process approach, emphasizing how HR content is communicated to employees and ultimately contributes to the development of positive employee behaviours, including affective commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB).

In sum, this research observes strength of the HRM system (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) as an independent variable and identifies its direct link with employee outcome (affective commitment, and OCB). Researchers have always associated employee behaviours as a proximal outcome rather than a distal outcome. Scholars like Guest, (1997), and Wright and Nishii, (2007)) have provided an HRM and performance model and, claimed that distal outcomes can be achieved through proximal outcomes. For instance, employee behaviours (proximal outcome), like commitment, and OCB can result in improving overall organisational performance (distal outcome). Furthermore, to this date, proximal analysis is under-represented in empirical research (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2012). Hence, this academic study aims to identify antecedent conditions (HRM system strength) that contribute to the development of employee behaviours or proximal outcomes (affective commitment and OCB) which further influence organisational outcomes.

Employee affective commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) are the two types of proximal outcomes or employee-related outcomes that are tested, examined, and discussed in this research. In today's unpredictable, volatile, and challenging business environment, where organisations are impacted due to competitors, government regulations, and the pandemic (COVID-19), employers are generally more concerned about retaining their skilled employee workers. Organisations need to develop commitment (Acar, 2012), and OCBs (Organ, 1988) among employees in order to survive and sustain in the uncertain business environment and to obtain a competitive advantage. Literature suggests that organisational commitment is one of the motivational factors that lead employees to be more productive and creative thus, influencing organisational performance (Stites and Michael, 2011). OCB improves an organisation's efficiency by establishing innovation, resource transformation, and adaptability in a complex environment thus, achieving a competitive advantage. Various studies have documented that employee

commitment (Conway and Briner, 2012; Wei and Lee, 2015) and OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000) strongly and greatly influence organisational performance. As of today, considerable attention has been directed toward studying commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB) among employees. Upon reviewing the literature, it is evident that HR Process researchers are keen on exploring the relationship and association between HRM system strength and commitment (Sanders et al., 2008; Cafferkey et al., 2019), as well as OCB (Katou, 2013; de la Rosa-Navarro, 2019), which ultimately contributes to organisational performance in the long term. It is imperative to present a general concept concerning these two dependent variables before providing arguments of their relationship with HRM system strength, thereby leading to the formulation of the study's first hypothesis.

Affective commitment

Firstly, focusing on the overall discussion about the variable commitment and why particularly affective commitment (dimension of organisational commitment) was selected for this research. Like many constructs in organisational psychology, employee commitment has been defined and conceptualised in multiple ways. The most common definition of employee commitment is, “a psychological link between employees and their organisation which will be less likely to make them leave the company” (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Committed employees are usually described as individuals who are regular at work, share the organisation’s vision and goal, stand through thick and thin, protect the company’s assets, and so on. Northcraft and Neale, (1996) defined commitment as a reflection of employees’ faithfulness toward the organisation and its interest. In sum, committed employees are individuals who show a) a strong desire to stay in the company, b) strongly believe in the organisation’s objectives and goals c) put considerable effort on behalf of the company.

Initially, organisational commitment was linked with employee turnover, as strongly committed employees are least likely to leave their employer. Table 2-1 provides theories and models of organisational commitment that were developed by academics over the years. The concept of organisational commitment has been the interest of researchers since Becker, (1960), proposed the “one-side-bet” theory. His theory suggested that commitment is generated in employees when they are consistently engaged in the line of activities and, establish ‘side-bets’. Side-bets are referred to as investments in organisations which are built over time, such as job security and accrued

vacations. Employees would prefer to stay loyal to their organisation if there is an existence of side-bets. The approach to organisational commitment was further expanded when Porter et al., (1974) introduced the 'affective dependency theory'. Their theory claimed that employee commitment does not just depend on economic factors, but affective or emotional sentiments are also involved. The theory further highlighted three factors needed to encourage organisational commitment among employees: 1) strong acceptance, 2) participation, and 3) loyalty.

However, the concept of organisational commitment remained unclear to the researchers despite their multiple attempts to investigate it, mainly because it was conceptualised as a unidimensional construct. Mowday et al., (1982) noted that, "academics from various disciplines ascribed their own meaning to the topic, thereby increasing the difficulty involved in understanding the construct" (p.20). Therefore, O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986) and, Meyer and Allen, (1984) provided multidimensional models of organisational commitment. Unlike the approaches of Becker, (1960), who predicted employee turnover as an outcome of commitment, O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986) assumed that commitment is a psychological attachment that an employee feels towards their organisation to such extent that a person starts to adopt or internalize the characteristic or perspective of the institute. They have provided three independent factors to identify psychological attachment. 1) compliance or instrumental involvement for specific, extrinsic rewards, 2) identification or participation based on the desire for an association, and 3) internalization or involvement predicted on the congruence between individual and organisational values. Although O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986) have an interesting approach to commitment, this research has adopted Meyer and Allen's approach to commitment mainly because it has been empirically tested, supported, and approved by other academic researchers as a strong tool to investigate the organisational commitment construct (Farndale et al., 2011; Jehanzeb and Mohanty, 2020).

In order to understand Meyer and Allen, (1984) approach to a commitment it is important to understand the long-standing two distinctions made to conceptualised organisational commitment, the "behavioural approach" and "attitudinal approach" (Scholl, 1981; Mowday et al., 1982). In the behaviour approach, an individual is usually committed to a particular course of action to such an extent that a mindset is developed, which would be considered as a result of committing to the course of action. Brown, (1996) noted that "in the behavioural approach, a person attains a state

or position of commitment as a result of engaging in committing acts - acts that, in effect, make it costly to subsequently reverse a position or disengage from some line of activity”. Acts that could make it difficult for an individual to leave the organisation are built-up retirement benefits, academic tenure, non-transferable funds, and so on. An example of this approach is the side-bet theory (Becker, 1960).

In the attitudinal approach, commitment is viewed as a mixture of work experience, personal characteristics, and perceptions of the organisations (Brown, 1996). As the current research is investigating the perceptions surrounding the high-performance work system (HPWS) leading to the establishment of commitment and OCB therefore, it is best to use the attitudinal approach rather than the behavioural approach to examine the construct in the study. Moreover, research about attitudinal commitment such as this one usually includes the measurement of the mindset, along with other variables which are treated as antecedents or consequences of commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Meyer and Allen, (1991) proposed a three-component model of attitudinal commitment (see Figure 2-1). Each of the various definitions of commitment mentioned previously reflects one of the three general categories of Mayer and Allen’s model: normative commitment, continuous commitment, and affective commitment.

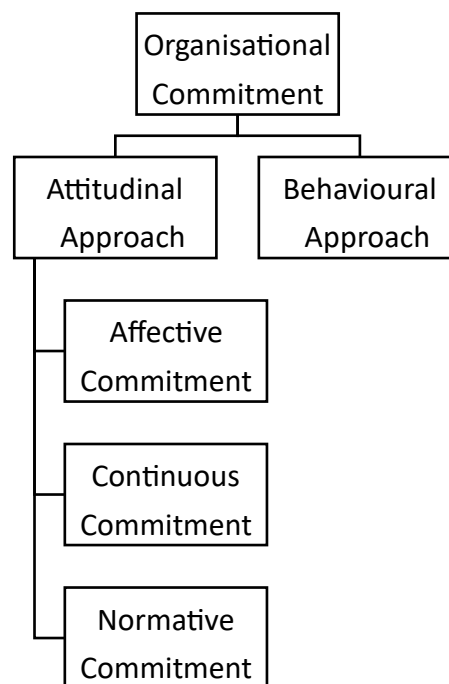


Figure 2-1: Organisational commitment Typology.

Normative commitment (NC) is when employees feel that there is an obligation to stay with the organisation, they would feel that it is morally the right thing to do (Meyer and Allen, 1997). It has been suggested that normative commitment develops during socialization (Wiener, 1982). The process that we are looking at here is internalization also referred to in the theory provided by O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986). New employees at an early stage adopts and internalise what is valued and what is expected from them in their organisation. In the case of normative commitment, employees internalize the belief of being loyal to the organisation. Meyer and Allen, (1991) noted that normative commitment is developed based on any kind of investment or favour that an organisation provides to its employees, which might be difficult for the employee to reciprocate. Such as a 'nepotistic hiring policy' that favours an employee's family member or pays off an employee's tuition fee, which will make employees feel obliged or indebted to their organisation.

Continuous commitment (CC) is noted as when there is a cost associated with leaving the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Continuous commitment is often linked with Becker's (1960) side-bet theory, an employee would lose their investment or side-bet in the company (time, effort, network, or recognition) if he or she decides to leave the organisation. As a result, employee prefers to stay loyal to the organisation and develop continuous commitment. Furthermore, perceptions of alternative opportunities can also impact continuous commitment in an individual, as Meyer and Allen stated, employees who have lesser visible job alternatives will have higher continuous commitment than those who have more alternatives. However, this needs to be considered that neither the investments nor alternative options for employees can affect the continuous commitment of every individual, as each employee has idiosyncratic views of what constitutes investment or alternative options. In simple words, each employee will view investments created by them in an organisation (time, network, recognition) and visible alternatives for them outside an organisation differently, so it will impact their level of continuous commitment differently.

The last form of commitment stated by Meyer and Allen, (1991) is affective commitment. Affective commitment is an emotional attachment to an organisation as manifested by an individual's identification with and involvement in, that organisation (Mercurio, 2015). An individual who can psychologically bond with an organisation

will tend to stay with the company through thick and thin and would not favour other economic factors over it. Besides retaining talented employees, affective commitment enhances other positive behaviours in employees such as satisfaction, job performance, or OCB (Jehanzeb and Mohanty, 2020; Scholl, 1981) resulting in improving overall organisational performance.

Over the past 15 years, there have been several arguments made that the three components of organisational commitment are qualitatively different concepts (Solinger et al., 2008). Empirical evidence has also indicated that affective commitment has repeatedly shown a stronger correlation with outcome variables (i.e., employee turnover, OCB, performance) than continuous and normative commitment (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005; Meyer et al., 2002). Moreover, affective commitment can contribute to behaviours such as information sharing and working extra hours, OCB, employee performance, and well-being which can mutually benefit both individuals and the organisation. Therefore, Solinger et al., (2008) argued that future studies should be based on a singular approach to examine the construct of commitment. They posited that affective commitment is necessary to observe due to its more conclusive empirical evidence. Thus, affective commitment as a construct is the core essence of organisational commitment and can prove to be an important area to focus on for future studies and practical implications (Mercurio, 2015). Building on the above arguments, rather than investigating all three dimensions of organisational commitment, this thesis has focused on the core essence of the commitment (affective commitment) and has observed it as an outcome variable of the study.

Another reason for selecting affective commitment as a dependent variable of the study rather than normative and continuous commitment is the issue of validity. Since continuous commitment is composed of two aspects, the cost associated when leaving the organisation and the lack of alternative opportunities, considerable concerns and issues have been highlighted and raised about this component's validity. In addition, continuous commitment primarily focuses on a particular course of action, for instance, leaving the organisation or staying with the company considering the cost and benefit analysis, rather than the attitude towards the organisation such as emotional attachment.

There are various measurement tools present in the literature to measure organisational commitment. Such as the scale presented by Grusky, (1966) which consists of four

measures, that mainly identify general attitude towards the organisation. Moreover, Alutto et al., (1973) identify factors that impact employees' decision to leave their organisation. However, among them, the most common of all was introduced by Mowday et al., (1979) (Affective- dependency theory mentioned before). The tool is called Organisational-Commitment-Questionnaire OCQ, which includes 15 multiple-choice questions and satisfies the reliability standard. However, the critics of the scale argue that some questions in OCQ measure the turnover intention or performance intention and reflect more towards behaviours intention rather than attitude (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). This resulted in researchers being more cautious in the application of OCQ. Later a shorter version of the 9-item OCQ scale was introduced, which excluded six negatively phrased items (Iverson, 1999). Then, a 12-item OCQ scale was developed by omitting three items from the original scale that reflected turnover intention (Becker and Wilson, 2000). Due to the criticism of the OCQ, the leading scale in the past 25 years to measure organisational commitment has been the three-dimensional scale by Meyer and Allen, (1984, 1991, 1997) and current research has used the same scale to measure organisational commitment, particularly affective commitment.

As explained before that affective commitment is an emotional link of employees towards their organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Provided that affective commitment is the core essence of organisational commitment (Mercurio, 2015) which leads to the important question for the researchers, how can these emotional bonds be facilitated? Affective commitment has been examined in both management and organisational behaviour research (Meyer et al., 2002). The researchers have tried to identify the predictors of affective commitment in organisational settings. Factors that influence the development of affective commitment are HRM activities such as HPWS (Cafferkey and Dundon, 2015), organisational justice (Purang, 2011), trust (Farndale et al., 2011) and individual perceptions of HR Practices (Sanders et al., 2008). This research is particularly interested in variable individual perceptions of HPWS (**HRM system strength**) as an antecedent to affective commitment (see research conceptual framework in Figure 2-2 and research objectives in Chapter One). To understand the relationship between HRM system strength and affective commitment, this study has used the theory provided by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), which is discussed further in the next section.

Organisational commitment theories and authors		Conception Frame	Main idea	Annotate
Side-bet theory	Howard Becker, (1960)	Contractual relation	One dimension	Allen has defined it as Continuous commitment
Affective dependency	Porter et al., (1974), Mowday et al., (1979)	Affective dependency	Organisational commitment leads to turnover.	Allen has defined it as affective. commitment
Multidimensional theories	O'Reilly and Chatman, (1986)	Compliance identification internalization	Multi-dimension For example, turnover, job search, withdrawal,	
	Meyer and Allen, (1984, 1990, 1997)	Continuous commitment Normative commitment Affective commitment	lateness, OCB, and so on	

Table 2-1; Evolution of organisational commitment

Organizational Citizenship behaviours (OCB)

Proceeding with the general discussion on the second dependent variable of this study, Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB). Organisations are focused on developing employees' attitudes that can help them take initiative when they are dealing with a challenging environment (COVID-19). Generally, employers depend on their organisation's policies and rules to influence their employees, however, it is not the best solution as prescribing behaviours would not be effective with the constant changes in the organisation and environment. Katz, (1964) stated that organisations rely mostly on their blueprints for prescribing behaviours, which is a weak social system instead, employers should focus more on building Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) in their employees. OCB are discretionary employee behaviours that are not formally rewarded by the organisation, but such behaviours play a major role in developing the organisation's effectiveness, social connection, and working environment (Organ, 1988). Such behaviours are not formally written or mentioned in employees' job descriptions but are expected to be performed by them. For instance, helping out colleagues, doing extra work, punctuality, sharing ideas, positively representing the organisation, and so on. OCB is the second outcome variable of the study besides affective commitment, and this thesis investigates its antecedent conditions for the formation of OCB among employees.

OCB improves an organisation's efficiency by establishing innovation, resource transformation, and adaptability in a complex environment. It improves the social mechanism of the organization. Supportive and voluntary behaviours of employees in an organisation develop morale, commitment, and social mechanisms, which either directly or indirectly influence organisational performance (Donglong et al., 2020). Bolino and Turnley, (2003) claimed that in the long term, the aggregate OCBs of individuals in an organisation can promote an excellent psychological environment that will ultimately enhance organisational performance. Therefore, OCB is useful to both employees and the company.

The idea of OCB was originally pointed out by Katz, (1964), he stated three behaviours of employees are needed for organisations to operate effectively, 1) employees should be actively participating, 2) employees should be acting according to the behavioural norms regulated by the company, and 3) employees should have automatic devotion towards the organisation. The third category of Katz's approach was later adopted by

Bateman and Organ, (1983) and they used the term ‘citizenship behaviours’ to refer to it. OCB construct was rapidly gaining popularity among HR scholars thus, it was not until Smith et al., (1983), referred to these employees’ attitudes with the term “organisational citizenship behaviours” (OCB). OCB is defined by Smith et al., (1983) as behaviours that cannot be rewarded nor can be punished through the formal system in an organisation.

Literature shows that OCB has been conceptualized in numerous ways (see Table 2-2), the most popular ones are explained as follows. The first one was a unidimensional approach, in this approach academics examined the OCB construct through a single dimension. This approach is rarely used by the current researchers and can only be found in the early studies of OCB such as Bateman and Organ, (1983) and Motowidlo, (1984). Later a two-dimensional approach to OCB was suggested by Smith et al., (1983), in this approach, OCB was conceptualised into two forms ‘altruism’ and ‘generalised compliance’. Generally, altruism is referred to as the helping behaviours of employees, such as helping other co-workers with their duties. Generalised compliance is employees’ actions that reflect compliance with general rules, norms, and expectations. They are a type of employee consciousness that indirectly aids others in the company (Smith et al., 1983). Later, Organ, (1988) proposed a five-dimensional model of OCB which has been given a considerable amount of attention by scholars. The five-dimensional model of OCB consists of 1) altruism- being helpful to other colleagues on a task, 2) courtesy – being polite and showing considerable behaviours to other colleagues 3) conscientiousness- going an extra mile or beyond the requirement to carry on one’s duty 4) sportsmanship- not complaining when things do not go as an individual has planned 5) Civic- Virtue – representing and talking about the organisation when one is not in the official capacity. Furthermore, Williams and Anderson, (1991) proposed a two-dimensional conceptualisation of OCB based on Organ’s, (1988) five-dimensional taxonomy. Williams and Anderson, (1991) suggested that actions of employees directed towards individuals should be categorised into OCBI (Altruism and courtesy), and behaviours that benefit the company overall should be viewed as OCBO (conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and Civic Virtue). Besides that, Morrison, (1994) provided the same five dimensions model of OCB as Organ, (1988) did, except that he replaced two dimensions “courtesy” and “civic virtue” with “involvement” and “keeping up with changes”.

Despite the variety of OCB models in the literature, Organ, (1988) five-dimension model has remained the most popular among researchers. Organ, (1988) model was further supported by Podsakoff and MacKenzie, (1989), who developed the OCB scale based on the five dimensions of OCB (Organ, 1988). The scale was improved by Podsakoff et al., (1990) and then by again Moorman, (1991). This is the most popular scale in OCB literature and is widely used by other researchers (Niehoff and Moorman, 1993; Katou, 2013).

To examine OCB, the current research, used five- dimensions identified by Organ,1988 and, they were collectively treated as one variable of the study. Hoffman et al., (2007) claimed that the majority of the OCB researchers have taken items from Padsakoff et al., (1990) scale and then computed an aggregate score across all the responses. Thus, assuming that the aggregate approach is the best representation of the OCB construct, this research has also adopted the same procedure to measure OCB.

This thesis primarily focuses on the antecedent conditions that lead to the development of Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB), as outlined in the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 2-2 and the research objectives.

De la Ruso-Navarro et al. (2019) argued that OCBs are possible employee responses when they perceive the HR content offered in an organization as relevant and satisfying their needs. Moreover, when HR content is clear to understand, consistent, and employees know what to expect, it indicates a stable environment and enhances organisational credibility – all of which are features of HRM system strength. Therefore, when employees experience distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus in the organisational environment, they are more likely to respond with OCBs in line with social exchange norms. Therefore, the study believes that HRM system strength has a positive association with OCB.

Authors	OCB Classification
Bateman and Organ, (1983)	Unidimensional
Motowidlo, (1984)	
Smith et al., (1983)	Altruism General Compliance

Organ, (1988)	Altruism Conscientiousness Sportsmanship Courtesy Civic Virtue
William and Anderson, (1991)	OCBs direct toward an individual OCBs direct towards the organisation
Morrison, (1994)	Altruism Conscientiousness Sportsmanship Involvement Keeping up with changes

Table 2-2: OCB Classification

2.3 Relationship between HRM system strength and employee outcomes (affective commitment and OCB)

As noted earlier, this study is trying to unbox the black box by concentrating on the HR process-oriented approach and linking it with employee behaviours. The present study aims to fill a research gap in the existing literature by investigating the relationship between employee perceptions of high-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) using the attribution process and employee outcomes while considering HR content as a given. While there is a growing body of research that has focused on individual employee perceptions (Nishii and Wright, 2008; Kehoe and Wright, 2013), Sanders and Yang (2016) argue that there are limited studies that have specifically examined the attribution of employee perceptions and its connection to employee outcomes.

Attribution theory explains, how employees process surrounding information to make attributions about something that can influence their subsequent behaviours (Kelly, 1973). Therefore, Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) suggested that HR content should exhibit a degree of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus as surrounding information for

employees to develop a clear understanding of these practices, which can further affect their attitudes and behaviours.

In order to consider the impact of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus on employee commitment and OCB, it is important to first understand the co-variance principle of attribution theory provided by Kelly, (1973) which was translated into the domain of HRM by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004). Based on the psychologist's viewpoint, people need unambiguous and adequate information to understand the cause of a situation, predict the future and attempt to re-establish control over their lives (Kelly,1973). Therefore, based on the HR perspective, employees will use these causal explanations (attribution) to make sense of their surroundings (HRM activities) influencing their subsequent behaviours and attitudes.

The covariance principle of attribution theory by Kelly, (1973) suggests that employees try to understand the cause of the situation considering the information related to distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Sanders and Yang, 2016). Based on Kelly's (1973) perspective, distinctiveness is a unique behaviours of an individual or object that will allow it to stand out in an environment, thus capturing attention while, consistency is the extent to which people behave every time the situation occurs, thereby referring it to as covariance of behaviour across time. Last, consensus is the covariance of behaviour across different people, when multiple people perceive the situation in the same way then consensus is high. The covariance theory suggests that a combination of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus will develop multiple patterns, which will lead to one of three general categories of causation (See Table 2-3). Moreover, the attribution theory suggests that by assessing the patterns or levels of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus either high or low in a given situation, it can be easily identified that a person will likely create personal (internal), stimulus (external), or circumstantial attribution.

Attribution	Distinctiveness	Consistency	Consensus
Stimulus	High	High	High
Personal	Low	High	Low
Circumstances	Low	Low	High

Table 2-3 :Co-variance by Kelly, (1973)

In pattern 1, an event is received as highly distinctive, highly consistent, and highly contextual, HHH, employees will attribute this event to stimulus. This pattern indicates

that something external is causing the behaviours. Pattern 2 indicates an event that conveys information that the respondent receives as low in distinctiveness, high in consistency, and low in consensus, LHL, an employee will attribute this event to personal. Only this individual perceives this situation in this way. This sort of pattern indicates that something internal is causing the behaviour. Pattern 3 indicates a situation that exhibits information that is perceived as low in distinctiveness, low in consistency, and high in consensus. LLH, this pattern indicates that employees attribute their behaviours to circumstances or organisations.

Sanders and Yang, (2016) claim that the majority of the studies on attribution in the organisational context are concerned with achievement-related attributions that are used by individuals to examine the success and failures of others and themselves. However, limited studies are there that have linked attribution with employee individual perceptions. Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) applied the co-variance principle to HRM and assumed the HHH pattern, where employees perceived HR practices to be standing out (high distinctiveness), perceived different HR practices to be aligned with each other (highly consistent), and perceive that colleagues (HR managers, Line manager) comprehend HR practices as they do (highly consensus), thereby employees will attribute HR practices to stimulus. For instance, suppose an employee in an organisation identifies the importance of performance appraisal (high distinctiveness), besides that, the employee also perceived that the standard of measuring the performance appraisal is the same as compared to the criteria of obtaining promotion and pay for performance (high consistency) last, the employee notices that there is consensus among co-workers because line manager and HR manager are exhibiting consensus regarding these HR practices (high consensus). Thereby employees make sense of HR practices in their organisation and see HR practices as the driver of what is happening in the company. Empirical evidence has also favoured this assumption such as Katou, (2013) found a direct and positive relationship between HRM system strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) and employee engagement and OCB. In addition, research studies have also found a positive impact of the strength of the HRM system on employee motivation and commitment (Hauff et al.,2017; Cafferkey et al.,2019).

This conjecture is largely but not entirely supported by the empirical studies that have examined the impact of HRM system strength on employee behaviours. The work of Sander et al., (2008), who conducted field research in the Netherlands, investigated the

effect of high distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus perceptions on employee affective commitment. The study was conducted on 671 employees, 67 line managers, and 32 HR managers from 18 departments in 4 hospitals. Distinctiveness and consistency were found to have a positive relationship with affective commitment, while consensus perceptions did not affect and predict affective commitment.

Similarly, another empirical research conducted by Li et al., (2011) in three hotels with 810 employees in China was an extension of the study conducted by Sanders et al., (2008). Rather than using affective commitment as an outcome variable, Li et al., (2011) adopted three employee behaviours, namely employee satisfaction, vigor, and intention to quit as dependent variables in their study. The study assumed that distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus positively impact work satisfaction and vigor, and negatively impact the intention to quit. The results concluded that distinctiveness is the strongest predictor, with a positive and significant relationship with satisfaction, vigor, and a negative relationship with intention to quit. Consensus was found to have a significant interaction effect on employee outcomes. However, consistency did not have a significant relationship with work satisfaction, and vigor, while a positive relationship was found with the intention to quit. In other words, the study has contradictory findings and suggests that the more employees perceive HPWS to be consistent, the more they would want to leave their jobs.

The result of consistency in the study of Li et al., (2011) is contrary to the theoretical work provided by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), who claimed that consistency is an essential meta-feature of the HRM system that will positively impact and enhance organisational performance. However, the empirical study by Li et al., (2011) concluded that high consistency perception of HPWS will not lead to positive employee behaviours but would rather increase employees' intention to quit, ultimately negatively influencing organisational performance. Although, the study conducted by de la Rosa-Navarro et al., (2020) found consistency to be the strongest predictor out of the three HR process features with employees' intention to remain and OCB.

Furthermore, the consensus is an important feature of the HRM system and is assumed to have a positive association with the employee and organisational outcome as theorised by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) but the construct has yielded conflicting empirical results. The study by Sanders et al., (2008) found no significant relationship between consensus and affective commitment. In addition, the consensus was found

to partially influence employee's intention to remain, and OCB (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). This suggests that the notion of non-linear and U- shaped relationship can be applied to the concept of HRM system strength (Dawson et al, 2008; Dickson et al 2006). High or low consensus will lead to undesirable employee behaviours, for example, if a very low consensus is present among HR policymakers, it would create disagreements among them whereas, when there is a high consensus, it would limit the range of perspective in group and stifle employee ideas and communication. However, there is still not enough theoretical and empirical evidence to support this claim to be true. As it is unclear why consensus in some studies has found an insignificant relationship. However, this thesis follows Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) theory which assumes that when there is low consensus in an organisation, employees would be unclear about the behavioural norms, which will result in undesirable behaviour. Whereas high consensus would result in a clear understanding of behavioural norms and would foster positive behaviour. Thus, the study suggests a positive association between consensus and affective commitment and OCB.

To understand the inconsistent results more empirical research is needed to investigate the effect of Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) model of HR process-oriented approach on employee and organisational outcomes. Thus, by considering the relationship between distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus with affective commitment and OCB this study is trying to enhance our understanding of the effects of the strength of the HRM system on employee outcomes and add further insight to existing literature. This will assist in filling in the gap in the literature, which is important and needed.

In sum, the features of HR content should be *visible, understandable, legitimate, and relevant to employees' goals* which will allow it to stand out in an organisation thereby capturing the attention and interest of employees and establishing distinctiveness perceptions. Furthermore, consistency is composed of *instrumentality, validity, and consistent HR message*. Last, consensus is *agreement among HR policymakers*. In order to understand the influence of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus on employee outcome affective commitment and OCB, the sub-categories of each meta feature could be the key. When HPWS is relevant to employees, they have been communicated in a way that is easily understandable (understandability), employees will know what they expect (visible), and they attribute a legitimacy of authority to a person responsible for HR policy, they are more likely to feel that their interests are considered by the employers, thus establishing a higher level of motivation,

commitment, and extra helping behaviours in employees. In addition, Instrumentality integrated with the relevance of HPWS can enhance motivation in employees which can further develop employee commitment and OCB (Lavelle et al., 2007). Moreover, an agreement between HR policymakers will help to increase the legitimacy and credibility of authorities of the HRM system (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020) creating consensus among employees, resulting in improved motivation, which will further enhance affective commitment and extra helping behaviours in employees. Thereby this study believes there is a positive association between the strength of the HRM system and commitment and OCB. Considering the above arguments, the study proposed its first hypothesis.

H1: Strength of the HRM system is positively related to H1(a) affective commitment and H1(b) OCB.

2.4 Bringing Climate into the model

Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) proposed the idea of organisational climate, the shared perceptions of employees that are established when employees perceive HR content as distinctive, consistent, and consensual. According to Sanders et al., (2008), the idea of organisational climate defined by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) is viewed as climate strength rather than climate level (James and Jones, 1974) or climate quality (Lindle and Brant, 2000). Climate level is an average perception of employees in an organisation that is represented by the convergent ratings of the perceptions of the specific facets of the work situation, for instance, service or safety (Schnieder, 1990). Climate strength is the shared perception within an organisation. It is an extension of an agreement and the existence of homogeneous views and perceptions in a team or an organisation. The concept of climate strength is closely related to Bowen and Ostroff's, (2004) theory of organisational climate as shared perceptions.

Generally, climate consists of employee perceptions and is a means of prevailing employment relationship within an organisation (Jiang et al., 2013). An organisational climate may generally be present in an organisation and various types of climates may co-exist in a given situation. This thesis focuses on the specific type of climate, the HR climate, it is defined as the extent of clear understanding about the purposes of HPWS in an organisation. In a strong climate, employee behaviours are predictable, they are more stable and there is less chance of any external factors influencing them. In such situations, the employer's expectations are well-defined and clear to the employees,

and there will be less variability among employees' perceptions. On the other hand, in a weak climate, the situation can be viewed where employees are unfamiliar with the norms of the HPWS, and they are unsure of what is expected, supported, and rewarded by the employer. To comprehend the HR climate, it is crucial to consider the social exchange theory. Within a strong climate or situation, employees perceive HR activities as representations of the organization's positive intent. As a result, employees, in turn, reciprocate with proactive and positive behaviours. Thus, organisation and employees can mutually benefit, creating opportunities for gains on both sides.

Climate has been viewed as a bridge or a construct that facilitates the sense-making and signalling effect of HR content (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Based on the contingency viewpoint of strategic HRM, it has been seen that different organisational strategies are linked with different HRM practices. For instance, in order to develop high commitment in employees it is important to adopt HR practices that are designed to create commitment in employees such as High-commitment-HRM (Agarwal, 2003). For the strategy of improving performance, HR practices such as HPWS which focuses on developing employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities need to be implemented in an organisation (Guest, 2007). It is assumed that various types of HR practices will interact and foster employee attitudes which will ultimately lead to positive organisational performance (Boxall and Macky, 2009). Therefore, based on this viewpoint, Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) claimed that the HRM system will impact employee behaviours and organisational performance, through employee interpretation of HR climate. Thereby climate will act as a mediator between HRM and the organisational outcome relationship.

Empirical studies such as Cafferkey and Dundon, (2015) have investigated climate as a mediator between HPWS and employee outcome at two distinct levels of analysis. The findings of the study indicate that climate acts as a mediator and is an important explanatory link between HRM and employee outcomes to unbox the black box. The study further claimed that it is the most neglected mediating construct in HRM studies. Furthermore, Sanders et al., (2008) examined HR climate as a mediator between the strength of the HRM system (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) and affective commitment however, contrary to Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) theory, the study identified that climate does not mediate the relationship but rather acts as a moderator between the two points of relationship. Furthermore, the study (Sanders et

al., 2008) indicates that the relationship between antecedent and outcome was strengthened when employees had similar perceptions regarding High commitment HRM within their department. The relationship between predictor and outcome was not strengthened to the same extent in departments where there was a weak climate.

In sum, the climate has been an ambiguous construct either in terms of definition (strength/ level), conceptualisation (general climate/specific climate) and, in its role (mediator/moderator). Additionally, as explained in the previous researchers would conceptualise HR climate and its features (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) as a holistic variable rather than two separate variables when determining its relationship with the employee and organisational outcomes. Therefore, there is a need for more empirical research that will investigate the mediating role of HR Climate along with HRM system strength and employee outcomes. This research believes that HR climate will have a mediating effect rather than moderating effect as initially theorised by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) and as examined by few researchers in their empirical studies (see Katou, 2013; Cafferkey and Dundun, 2015; Cafferkey et al., 2019). Thus, this thesis has selected HR climate as the first mediator in the model. Besides testing the mediating role of climate, the study is also interested in the relationship between HRM system strength and climate as explained below.

Employees' perceptions of HR content that are implemented in an organisation influence employee proactive behaviour. Kinnie et al., (2008) suggest that a distinction should be made between HR content implemented and how they are perceived by the employees. The outcomes of HR content (i.e., positive behaviours) actually reside in the perceptions and meanings that employees have attached to those practices (Nishii et al., 2008). Distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus perceptions assist employees in developing an understanding and sense-making of HR content, establishing a strong HR climate. In such a case, employees would have a clearer and uniform understanding of the kind of attitudes and behaviours expected, rewarded, and supported by their management to improve organisational performance (Russo, et al., 2018).

HR Climate is considered a significant aspect of the organisational message (distinctiveness, consistency and consensual) that is communicated to employees, it acts as an internal form of branding that points to the intentions behind HR content (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Cafferkey et al., 2019). It serves as a critical component of the organization's intent received by the employees (Li et al., 2011). Katou, (2013)

views a strong climate where employees have high satisfaction with HR content. Satisfaction with HR content reflects the idea that employees have a clear understanding of it and, view such practices as meaningful and purposeful. HR climate is produced by members' interaction, thoughts, and feelings through interpreting a situation that is highly distinctive, consistent and consensual. It is yielded through how employees perceive treatment, relationships (Reece and Reece, 2016), and experience HR content (HRM system strength) in their working environment (Katou, 2013; Kinnie et al., 2008).

Given that features of the HRM system act as a necessary condition for an HR climate to emerge, it is theoretically suggested that the three features have a positive relationship with the HR climate (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). Furthermore, empirical evidence from the work of Katou, (2013) in Greece during the economic crisis indicates that HRM system strength is positively related to with HR climate. In contrast, when these three features do not exist, it is highly unlikely that management's intentions and expectations are clear to their employees, thus it would subsequently lead to a weaker climate and poorer organisational performance (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). In other words, the Strength of the HRM system will facilitate and develop a strong Climate. Therefore, this study proposed its second hypothesis.

H2: strength of the HRM system has a positive relationship with HR Climate

2.5 Bringing Organisational Justice into the model

The previous section shed light on employees' individual perceptions, named distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus about HR content, which will collectively establish the HR climate in an organisation. The uniformity in employees' perceptions will collectively impact and enhance proximal outcomes such as employee commitment (Sanders et al.,2008), engagement, motivation (Katou, 2013), and satisfaction (Li et al.,2011). However, de la Rosa-Navarro et al., (2020) claimed that fairness in an organisation such as either in allocating rewards or benefits and distributing those benefits can affect the capacity of the HRM system to influence employee attitudes and behaviours. The perceived fairness of the HRM system indicates how positively HRM activities are being viewed by the employees (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Thereby, in a cause-and-effect relationship, fairness is considered essential and is required to establish the 'effect' (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Researchers have often used the term fairness or organisational justice interchangeably. Literature indicates that organisational justice has been distinguished into three dimensions, distributive justice, procedural, and interactional justice (Colquitt et al., 2001; Frenkel et al., 2012a; Colquitt et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2015). Distributive justice was the earliest form of fairness construct used in research studies. Much of the work regarding this dimension was conducted by Adam, (1965). He used the idea of social exchange theory to examine distributive justice in an organisation. Adam's equity theory suggested that an individual should evaluate their contribution or input to their output (input/output) and then, compare that ratio with the ratio of others to determine if outcomes are fair. Farndale et al., (2011) stated that distributive justice refers to the perceived equity of outcomes for individuals and the primary focus of this dimension is on the distribution of outcomes in an organisation. For instance, rewards and benefits, wages or bonuses that result in what an individual perceives to be fairly given.

Procedural justice gained its popularity in HRM studies after Thibaut and Walker, (1975) claimed that fairness of an outcome is not sufficient enough to determine organisational justice, but rather fairness in processes and procedures are also necessary. Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness in procedures and the decision-making process to such an extent that, it is viewed as unbiased, accurate, consistent, and open to input and voice (Colquitt et al., 2013). An employee will only perceive outcomes to be fair or equitable if the procedures of allocating those outcomes are fair. When employees believe that an organisation's decision-making process is not fair or just, then it is highly likely that employees' commitment and satisfaction with the organisation decreases, thus resulting in high turnover. Furthermore, Greenberg, (1990) suggested that employee involvement can help enhance the perceptions of fairness, especially when linked with procedural justice. For instance, when employees are involved in setting up their targets or in any other procedures that are being held in the company, they will most likely perceive those targets and procedures as just or fair.

Interactional justice is the third dimension of organisational justice, and it has been explained as the quality of treatment employees receive from their superiors (Bies and Shapiro, 1987). Colquitt et al., (2001) claimed that interactional justice can be categorised into two forms, interpersonal justice, and informational justice. Interpersonal justice refers to the fairness, honesty, and sincerity in treatment provided

by superiors to their subordinates. While informational justice is fairness in communicating information provided by superiors to their subordinates. Colquitt et al., (2013) defined interpersonal and informational justice as, “perceived fairness in enactment and implementation of decisions, with initially reflecting the respectfulness and propriety of communication and latter reflecting the truthfulness and adequacy of explanations”. In sum, all four forms of justice are based on the judgments of individuals on what is fair and unfair to their attitude. The current study has examined organisational justice as one construct using a scale by Colquitt et al., (2001), that provides a measurement of each of the four dimensions provided.

Organisational justice has multiple positive traits that have made it the subject of interest for many scholars in the past decades (see Greenberg, 1990; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Colquitt et al., 2013). Researchers have often observed organisational justice as a predictor of employee behaviours (see Jahanzeb and Mohanty, 2019), while many have also examined it as a mediator (see Frenkel et al., 2012a; Katou., 2013) or moderator between HRM and positive employee attitudes. Extant research indicates that procedural justice has been seen to have a positive link with trust in management (Tan and Tan, 2000; Tremblay et al., 2010), employee commitment, (Farndale et al., 2011), and job satisfaction. Furthermore, distributive justice has a strong association with outcome satisfaction such as fairness level in performance assessments, pay, or rewards (Greenberg, 1990). Thereby distributive justice is often examined with specific personal outcomes. Empirical research by Frenkel et al., (2012a) found that the existence of distributive justice in an organisation reduces the negative emotions in employees which in turn leaves employees less emotionally exhausted.

Since the existence of fairness in an organisation acts as an antecedent to positive employee behaviours, literature has also indicated that an unjust or low level of fairness in an organisation can enhance counterproductive work behaviours (Colquitt et al., 2013). Counterproductive work behaviours are employee behaviours that hinder the progress and growth of the organisation, such behaviours include employee theft, accidents, verbal or physical abuse, sexual harassment, poor attendance, poor job performance, and so on.

The empirical results on justice have shown inconsistency in terms of its roles and its effects on employee outcomes in different contextual settings. For instance, Jiang et al., (2017) found distributive justice to have a non-significant relationship with affective

commitment in an Australian context, while a significant relationship in the Chinese and South Korean contexts. Additionally, Yadav and Gupta, (2017) conducted empirical research on 204 employees belonging to the tourism industry in India, to investigate the impact of procedural justice on Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB). The study concluded that procedural justice is significantly and positively related to OCB in employees in India. However, Jahanzeb and Mohanty, (2019) found a nonsignificant relationship between organisational justice and OCB while a significant relationship between organisational justice and commitment in the Pakistani context. It has been noted that culture can intervene with the effects of fairness as organisational justice has often responded differently, to different employee outcomes, based on the context, particularly in countries with high power distance such as Pakistan (Islam et al., 2012). Cultural differences can play an important role in determining the role and effect of fairness in an organisation and could be the reason behind the inconsistent results in the literature. Thereby there is a need for more studies of justice and fairness in different cultures. Current research has empirically tested the role and effects of organisational justice in a company present in Pakistan to develop insight and understanding of this construct in non-western culture.

In summary, this research is based on Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) HRM system theory, which posits that three individual perceptions regarding HR content, namely distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus, collectively establish the HR climate and ultimately influence employee and organisational outcomes. Recognising that perceptions of fairness within an organization can impede the influence of the HRM system on positive employee attitudes, it becomes crucial for the HRM system to be perceived as fair. Hence, this research considers organisational justice as the second mediator, which follows the HR climate in sequence, to mediate between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcomes (commitment and OCB). Besides that, the study is also interested in the relationship between Climate and Justice discussed below.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) have asserted that a strong climate, characterized by clear and shared views, fosters a perception of justice among employees. As discussed previously, there are four dimensions of justice: distributive justice, which pertains to fairness in outcome distribution (e.g., pay, rewards, promotion); procedural justice, which refers to fairness in the procedures used to determine outcomes; interpersonal justice, which relates to fairness in employee treatment by managers; and

informational justice, which concerns fairness in the communication of information provided by superiors to subordinates (Colquitt et al., 2001)

When employees share uniform views, they tend to perceive their organisation as just. Katou, (2013) stated that HR climate is positively associated with organisational justice. Therefore, the stronger the HR climate in an organisation, the more likely employees are to perceive fairness in reward distribution, HR procedures, and communication of information. Empirical evidence supporting this can be seen in the work of Frenkel et al., (2012a), who conducted field research on migrant workers in two manufacturing organisations located in China. The results concluded that climate positively influences all dimensions of justice.

Moreover, employee satisfaction is also considered an indicator of a strong climate (Katou, 2013). Empirical research by Zhang and Agarwal, (2009) concluded that employee satisfaction, particularly with effective management communication, is positively related to organisational justice, specifically procedural justice, and interactional justice. Viewing this in a broader context, it is assumable that the existence of a strong HR climate can influence employees' perceptions of fairness in the organisation. This can further evoke positive behaviours (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) and improve performance. Conversely, Katou, (2013) stated that a weaker climate indicates and encourages the perception of injustice in an organisation. Therefore, this study proposed its third hypothesis.

H3: HR climate has a positive relationship with organisational justice.

2.6 Bringing Organisational Trust into the model

The previous section explained the literature on organisational justice and its mechanism of how it is an important construct in an organisation setting and HRM system strength framework to establish employees' outcomes. The work of Cohen-Charash and Spector, (2001) and Colquitt et al., (2013) provides a straightforward explanation that how various dimensions of justice have affected different employee outcomes. For instance, distributive justice would predict dependent variables referenced to outcomes, procedural justice would predict dependent variables referenced to system, and interactional justice would predict dependent variables referenced to agent (Bies and Shapiro, 1987). However, according to Colquitt et al., (2013), the link between justice and employee outcomes is not explicit and direct but, there is an integration of the social exchange relationship with justice to predict

employee outcomes. Social exchange theory (Blau,1964) points to the principle of reciprocation or exchange of favours, which can influence the behaviours of individuals in social interaction (Jahanzeb and Mohanty, 2019). The rule of exchange relationship described by Gouldner, (1960), is that people would help those who help them. Thereby, the beneficial actions conducted by the organisation such as fairness within an organisation would result in beneficial actions reciprocated by the employees such as OCBs. Konovsky and Pugh, (1994) argued that fairness in an organisation can foster a sense of trust in the organisation which can make the social exchange more viable and, thus encourage positive employee behaviours. Similarly, Jiang et al, (2017) annotated that trust is an important element embedded in the social exchange (Blau,1964), which has been viewed as an indicator of exchange quality and has often exhibited a mediating effect between Justice and employee outcomes. Employees tend to trust their organisation when they believe that their organisation has characteristics of fairness. Therefore, they would reciprocate with commitment towards their organisation and willingness to go the extra mile to perform their duties. Based on the literature on the justice and trust relationship, trust is established as a third mediating variable of this study, which will facilitate the establishment of affective commitment and OCB in employees. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the trust construct and justification for using trust as the third mediator of this study.

Organisational trust is a debatable construct as various scholars would define and examine this variable differently (Colquitt and Rohdale, 2011). Some scholars would view trust as a *confident, positive expectation* about the trustee's conduct, motives, and intention in situations entailing risk (Lewicki and Bunker, 1995; McAllister, 1995). These positive expectations will create willingness in individuals to act on the basis of the words and decisions of the trustee (McAllister,1995). On the other hand, few researchers view trust as a *willingness to be vulnerable* to the words, actions, and decisions of the trustee, on the basis of the expectation that the trustee will act in accordance with their beneficiary irrespective of any monitoring or control mechanism (Mayer et al., (1995). Furthermore, Mayer et al., (1995) have provided a distinction between trust and trustworthiness, while trust is viewed as a willingness to be vulnerable, trustworthiness is categorised as attributes or characteristics of a trustee that inspire trust. These characteristics are ability (reflects competency, and skills), benevolence (reflects the sense that the trustee wants to do good to the truster), and integrity (adherence to a set of acceptable principals or set of shared values). Hence,

when employees view their supervisor as trustworthy, (ability, benevolence, integrity) it is more likely that they will trust their supervisor. Although academics have distinguished trust either as a psychological state or as a choice behaviour. However, there is an emerging agreement concerning the definition of trust. According to Fischer et al., (2020), the most popular definition of trust cited by the majority of the researchers in their study was provided by Rousseau et al., (1998).

“Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon the positive expectations of the intentions or the behaviours of others” (Rousseau et al., 1998; p. 395).

Since organisational trust has been the interest of researchers for the past 60 years, therefore literature indicates multiple models and measurements of this construct. Trust has been observed as unidimensional and multi-dimensional. McAllister, (1995) was the first to propose a multi-dimensional model that suggested two fundamental forms of organisational trust, cognitive base trust, and affective base trust. Cognitive trust is built on the reasoning that occurs to determine if someone is trustworthy while affective trust is established through emotional links and bonds between two parties. Similarly, Lewicki and Bunker, (1995) proposed two forms of trust, *calculus base trust* (trust based on cost and benefit analysis) and *identification base trust* (trust based on shared values). Furthermore, they claimed that trust is built over time, it initially starts with a calculus base trust which is cognitive, and based on cost and benefit analysis, then later on, as time passes and trust is developed at a deeper level, forming *identification base trust*, which is affective trust, and based on emotional bond and shared values.

Additionally, Tan and Tan, (2000) argued that trust can be distinguished based on the focus of trust, such as ‘trust in supervisor’ and ‘trust in organisation’. When we view organisational trust in a broader context it means, employees are trusting the aims and objectives of the organisation, its procedures, its management system, and the whole organisation. An employee might trust their supervisor, but it is not necessary that they trust their organisation as well, probably because the employee and supervisor would have a good working relationship and would associate their manager as a friend.

Hence, Tan and Tan, (2000) concluded that trust in a supervisor and trust in an organisation are related concepts but, each differs in their antecedents and outcomes variables. Antecedents to trust in a supervisor are ability, benevolence, and integrity

(Meyar et al., 1995; Tan and Tan, 2000) of a manager while, antecedents to trust in organisation are organisational justice (Colquitt et al., 2013) and organisational support (Tan and Tan, 2000). On the other hand, the outcome of trust in the supervisor is employee satisfaction and the outcome of trust in organisation is employee commitment (Tan and Tan, 2000). Considering the above discussion, it is best to observe trust in organisation rather than trust in managers because this study's primary focus is to investigate the mediating role of trust between justice and commitment and OCB which are the antecedents and outcomes of 'trust in organisation'. Thereby this thesis has opted to examine trust in organisation as it has a stronger association with organisation justice and employee commitment as explained above. Tan and Lim, (2009) identified the need for further research on trust in organisation, as the majority of the research studies of trust in specific targets are more focused on trust in supervisor, leader, manager, or work-group leader (see Meyer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Nienaber et al., 2015; Knoll and Gill, 2011) but limited attention has been given to the trust in management and trust in organisation.

Similarly, just as there are multiple forms and shapes of trust, literature offers various scales and techniques to measure organisational trust. McEvily and Tortoriello, (2011) in their review of organisational trust measurement, found 129 unique measures present, which observe trust as a unidimensional or multi-dimensional construct. This study has used the scale used by Robinson, (1996), which reflects Gabarro and Athos's, (1976) scale which was developed to identify trust in organisation.

Employees' trust in their organisation highlights their willingness to be vulnerable to the organisation's decisions and actions to fulfil its obligations (Tan and Tan, 2000). As discussed previously, trust is an essential element that can shape social exchange reciprocation so, researchers claim that fairness in an organisation contributes to the development of trust. When employees view fairness in terms of output (distributive justice), procedures (procedural justice), and communication of information (interactional justice), they are likely to hold favourable perceptions about their organisation and ultimately establish a higher level of trust (Tremblay et al., 2010). Individuals who trust their organisations are more likely to be helpful towards their colleagues and will exhibit a commitment towards their organisation. Researchers have often believed that trust is a construct that can facilitate the effect of justice on employee outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). Moreover, empirical evidence has also supported this claim, a study conducted by Jiang et al., (2017)

examined the mediating role of trust between justice and commitment in a survey conducted in China, South Korea, and Australia and found that trust fully mediates the relationships in three different cultures. In contrast, a lower level of trust in employees' perceptions can lower the motivation to adopt positive behaviours that can influence the efficiency, productivity, and performance of the organisation (Tremblay, et al., 2010). However, despite various studies on trust, there remains to be a gap in the literature. There is less empirical evidence of trust in organisation as compared to trust in supervisors, resulting in the role of trust in organisation and its relationship with outcome variables being doubtful and questionable. As Lewicki et al., (2005; p.254) stated, "No assessment of justice and trust relationship in the justice literature provides a fine-grained understanding or analysis of the rich trust literature". By following the conclusion drawn by Tan and Tan, (2000) that, trust in organisation is an outcome of organisational justice and antecedent to employee commitment, therefore this thesis will examine its mediating effect between them. Moreover, in order to understand the context in which organisational justice will impact trust, it is important to consider the macro environment (Farndale, et al., 2011), therefore this study has examined trust in the organisation rather than trust in the manager as a mediator between justice and employee outcome (commitment and OCB).

Relationship between justice and trust

As noted previously, the study suggests that shared and uniform perceptions about HR content will influence organisational justice. Furthermore, the thesis argued that when employees perceive their organisation to be fair, they will develop trust in their organisation. Jiang et al., (2017) explained that employee trusts their organisation primarily, because they believe their contributions are fairly considered, and they will be rewarded fairly, as part of their social exchange relationship with the employer. Trust in the organisation is more likely to happen when employees perceive fairness as a characteristic of the organisation (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). Therefore, researchers claim that justice and trust have a positive association with each other (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Aryee, et al., 2002; Colquitt, et al., 2012).

Trust is defined as a confident, positive expectation about the trustee's conduct (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). As noted in previous sections, trust has been observed in multiple ways, one such way is a distinction of trust as horizontal and vertical trust (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006), horizontal trust refers to trust in co-workers while vertical

trust means to trust in organisation. In order to understand the context in which organisational justice will impact trust, it is important to consider the macro-environment (Farndale, et al., 2011), therefore this study will examine vertical trust. When we view organisational trust in a broader context it means, employees are trusting the organisation's aims and objectives, procedures, management system, and the whole organisation.

Each dimension of justice has fostered organisational trust through a distinct set of justice rules and reasons. Interpersonal and informational justice have shown the strongest influence in developing trust because it focuses on interpersonal treatment between managers-subordinates thus, it fosters trust in authorities (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). Procedural justice promotes professionalism and provokes trust in the management system. Empirical studies have also shown that procedural justice has influenced organisational trust (Stinglhamber, et al., 2006; Colquitt, et al., 2012). While, distributive justice was initially associated with actions linked with a specific outcome, such as pay satisfaction (Folger and Konovsky, 1989), later studies found that, distributive justice along with other dimensions of justice, plays a significant role in developing employees' trust in the organisation (Aryee, et al., 2002; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). When employees believe they are fairly compensated for their work, they are more likely to develop trust in their organization. An employer who genuinely cares about their employees' well-being and happiness exhibits benevolence and goodwill, establishing perceptions of trustworthiness (Aryee et al.,2002). Therefore, the study **argues** that if employer consistently treats their employees with fairness, ensure just reward allocation and procedures, and act in line with what they say they will do, employees will reciprocate by trusting their organisation (Tan and Tan, 2000; Tan and Lim, 2009). Thereby, the study proposes its third hypothesis.

H4: Organisational justice has a positive relationship with Organisational Trust

Relationship between trust, affective commitment and OCB

As noted, trust in an organisation facilitates and contributes to employees proactive and positive behaviours. This research interprets the relationship of trust with OCB and affective commitment. Considering the relationship between trust and OCB first, Organ (1998, 1990) was one of the early few researchers who interpreted OCB through

the lens of social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, interactions between individuals are contingent, liable, and interdependent upon the actions of others (Blau, 1964) and these interactions can result in high-quality relationships, under certain conditions. In an organisational context, social exchange is referred to as an interaction between the organisation and employees (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2013). Social exchange is considered a transaction (Cropanzano and Rupp, 2008), but is often viewed as a relationship (Moorman and Bryan, 2005). From a social-exchange relationship perspective, a mutually desired relationship between employees and employer helps the organisation to function effectively. Thus, individuals exhibit OCB as the reciprocation of positive and desired benefits that they are receiving from the organisation. Empirical studies have identified that the desired benefits that employees receive are fairness in an organisation, which generates trust in the organisation (Tremblay et al., 2010), and in exchange, employees reciprocate with OCB (Fischer et al., 2020).

Some academics indicate that trust is an important element that will develop cooperation in an organisation (Tyler, 2003). OCB refers to extra-helping behaviours of employees that are beyond their job role and job description (Fischer et al., 2020). Moreover, trust is viewed as a glue that will bind employee and employer relationships and will establish a supportive social system (Tremblay et al., 2010). Thereby trust is viewed as a construct that will positively influence employees to engage in extra helping behaviour. However, when trust is damper, it decreases employees' motivation to engage in OCB. Empirical and theoretical studies indicate that a higher level of trust in an organisation is associated with OCB. Such as the work of Dirks and Ferrin, (2002) indicate that trust perceptions in employees foster altruism and conscientiousness. Furthermore, Hui et al., (2004) investigated a relationship between psychological contracts and OCB in China and concluded that employment relations that are based on mutual support and trust will play a role of moderation in encouraging OCB. McAllister, (1995) claimed employees who trust their employers and co-workers are more likely to help and cooperate with them. In addition, recent empirical researchers have found that both cognitive (Newman et al., 2014) and affective trust (Miao et al., 2014) facilitate and contribute to OCB.

The second dependent variable of this study is affective commitment, characterised as an employee's psychological connection with the organisation (Meyer and Allen, 1990) and a feeling of obligation to remain with the employer (Fischer et al., 2020).

Empirical research has found a positive association between trust and affective commitment (Hon and lu, 2010), wherein trust in the employer fosters the establishment of an emotional connection.

Researchers have identified affective commitment as a key behavioural response within the social exchange relationship when employee trust their employer (Aryee et al.,2002; Trembley et al.,2010; Jiang et al., 2017). When employee view their organisation in a positive context such as being trustworthy (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011) they are more likely to reciprocate with positive behaviour, such as commitment. Moreover, when employees trust their organization or manager, they are inclined to form an emotional bond. For instance, trust in superiors leads employees to perceive feedback, both positive and negative, as genuine, thus motivating them to act on managerial recommendations, ultimately enhancing performance and relational dynamics.

Moreover, trust in the organisation provides employees with a sense of reassurance regarding the fulfilment of their employer's future obligations. Ultimately, trust in the organization's future intentions fosters the development of an emotional bond and encourages affective commitment. Empirical studies between organisational trust and affective commitment have also shown consistent results (Aryee, et al., 2002; Katou, 2013). Mia et al., (2014) concluded that both forms of trust (cognitive and affective trust) encourage the development of affective commitment in employees. Furthermore, affective commitment has been seen to be more strongly associated with trust rather than normative and continuous commitment (Mercurio, 2015). Thereby considering the discussion above this thesis proposed hypotheses.

H5: Organisational trust has a positive relationship with H5 (a) affective commitment and H5(b) OCB.

2.7 Sequential mediation of HR Climate, organisational justice and trust between HRM system strength and affective commitment and OCB

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, this thesis has developed a conceptual framework to investigate the relationship between HRM system strength on employee affective commitment and OCB. The framework includes the serially mediating role of HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust.

Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) suggested HR climate acts as a mediator between HRM system strength and employee outcomes. In other words, a clear understanding among employees will act as a bridge and will facilitate the individual perceptions of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus regarding HR content to employee proactive and positive behaviours (affective commitment and OCB). However, the empirical results concerning the mediation role of HR climate are mixed, with few studies arguing that HR Climate has limited mediating properties rather it acts as a strong moderator between HRM system strength and employee outcomes (Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011). On the other hand, certain studies concluded that HR Climate does mediate between the HRM system strength and employee outcome (Katou, 2013; Cafferkey et al., 2019). The discrepancies in findings may be attributed to variations in how HR climate is observed, investigated (general or facet), and defined (climate level/climate strength).

The climate is defined as the source of influence shaping employee behaviours within an organisation (Moran and Volkwein, 1992). It plays a crucial mediating role in prevailing employer and employee relationships and signalling the organisation's intent. Considering the social exchange perspective, the HR practices are an indication of the organisation's support and intent, and in a strong climate, they are positively viewed, which in turn elicits positive and proactive employee behaviours. HR climate acts as an internal form of branding, pointing to the signals, messages, and positive intent of the organisation (Cafferkey et al., 2019). In simple words, the relationship between cause and effect is facilitated through HR climate. Therefore, HR climate is treated as the first mediating variable between the strength of the HRM system and employee behaviours in this research (See Figure 2-2).

Moving on with the discussion, Katou, (2013) suggested that positive employee behaviours are influenced not only by HR climate but also by specific factors of justice and trust. From a social exchange perspective, a strong HR climate leads to the perception of justice (Zhang and Agarwal, 2009), then fairness in the organisation facilitates the development of confidence and trust (Colquitt, et al., 2012), as result employees reciprocate with proactive and positive employee behaviours (Katou, 2013; Tremblay, et al., 2010). The trust serves as an important indicator of exchange quality. It plays a significant role in mediating the relationships between justice-OCB (see Katou, 2013) and justice-commitment (Jiang et al., 2017). Theoretical, and empirical literature suggests that justice alone cannot play any role in developing OCB and

affective commitment, but the perception of trust is needed to facilitate this relationship (Colquitt et al., 2001; Aryee et al., 2002; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Farndale et al., 2011). Moreover, empirical evidence from various studies has consistently shown consensus (Trembley et al., 2010; Aryee et al., 2002).

Therefore, organisational justice and organisational trust are treated as the second and third mediators of the study (see Figure 2-3). In summary, this study argues that climate, justice, and trust serially mediate the relationship between HRM system strength and affective commitment and OCB. Therefore, this study aims to investigate this claim and propose its sixth hypothesis.

H6: HR Climate, Justice, and Trust sequentially mediate between HRM system strength and H6 (a) affective commitment and H6(b) OCB.

2.8 Pakistan as a context and IHRM.

During the deregulation and privatisation program in the 1990s, Pakistan's private sector grew with rapid speed. The government took steps to privatise the entire public sector, thus establishing a robust business environment. Following political party and military regimes that came to power after the 1990s also encouraged the private sector to flourish through governance and economic reforms. As a result, commercial banks, textile, telecommunication sectors, and most manufacturing industries, including cement, sugar, fertiliser, automobile, and electrical appliances, are privately owned. Economic policymakers have considered industries such as ICT, banking, and manufacturing industries vital for economic growth (Government of Pakistan, 2007; World Bank, 2013). Thus, the manufacturing sector is considered the backbone of the GDP of a country.

According to the World Bank, (2013), Pakistan has slow economic growth and one of the reasons for that is its low labour productivity. The outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic further shrinks the production and employee productivity in the manufacturing industry of Pakistan, particularly the electrical equipment industry. The electrical equipment industry in Pakistan's manufacturing sector has faced massive losses and witnessed a decline in its growth rate since COVID-19. This raises questions regarding their HR policies because as compared to other industries in the manufacturing sector, the electrical equipment production sector has not shown resilience. Considering the report of the economic survey of Pakistan (Economic

survey of Pakistan, 2022) this industry has not recovered to the same extent as other industries in the large-scale manufacturing sector of Pakistan (i.e., textile).

HR practices such as HPWS can help to improve employees' skills, productivity, and social and working environment which can assist organisations to recover from the loss due to the pandemic. The participating organisation has adopted HPWS and belongs to the manufacturing sector. The organisation is privately owned and has a diverse business portfolio, but its main business is to produce affordable and durable electronic products for customers. Other fields that this organisation is operating are tiles manufacturing, motors and metals, textile, power and energy generation, software development, technology solutions, and e-commerce.

Based on the literature, characteristics which largely account for organisational practices in Pakistan are corruption, centralisation, and nepotism (Islam, 2012; Khilji and Wang, 2006). Thus, it is believed that such traits would hinder the efficiency and adoption of modern HRM such as high-performance work system practices (Ahmed and Allen, 2014) resulting in a decline in organisational performance. However, HRM in Pakistani organisations is going through a developmental phase as many organisations have successfully moved to merit-based procedures and modern HRM to improve employee behaviours and organisation performance (Riaz et al., 2021). However, there are limited studies that have focused on the outcomes of implementing modern HR (i.e., HPWS, HCHRM) and HR process in the Pakistani context.

The literature indicates that there is an extremely limited number of HRM system studies conducted in underdeveloped economies, particularly in Pakistan (see Budhwar and Singh, 2007). As the majority of the HRM system research is conducted in a western context, where researchers have either focused on HR content (Frenkel et al., 2012a) or HR process (Sanders et al., 2008) or have investigated them both collectively as HRM system (Katou et al., 2014). Pakistan as a context has largely been over-looked in HRM studies. Although HRM researchers that have researched in the Pakistani context have concentrated on a relatively smaller number of organisations, whose findings cannot be generalised, or have focused on HPWS or HR content alone (Abuznaid, 2006; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Mehllahi and Budhwar, 2010; Ahmend and Allen, 2014) while giving less to no attention to employee perceptions surrounding HR content. Studies that have focused on the HR process such as Riaz et al., (2021) have discussed the general concept of employee perceptions but have not incorporated

attributions or features of the HRM system (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus). Thus, establishing the need for more information and insight into the HR process framework in the Pakistani context. In addition, to this date, the researcher is not aware of any empirical studies on the HR process and employee reaction relationship using the serial mediation model conducted in the Pakistani manufacturing sector.

2.9 Pakistani Culture and times of crisis (Covid-19)

The national culture concept has been extensively studied by Hofstede (1980). National cultural values encompass both conscious and subconscious beliefs and norms that are present in the moral, legal, and practical aspects of a society.

Pakistan is characterised as a tight society (Farndale and Sanders, 2017), wherein cultural tightness denotes the extent to which individuals are uncomfortable with deviations from established values, often enforced by laws and sanctions when these values are transgressed. Farndale and Sanders, (2017) argue that in tight cultures like Pakistan, where norms and values are largely shared, the features of HRM system may become inconsequential in fostering shared employee perceptions and positive employee behaviours. However, this proposition has yet to be empirically tested in tight societies, as the majority of HR process studies have been conducted in Western contexts (Sanders et al., 2008; de la Russo, 2020). This renders Pakistan an intriguing context for field research, aiming to ascertain whether HRM systems designed for Western organisations can be equally effective and successfully impact employee affective commitment and citizenship behaviours in the Eastern tight society during the COVID-19 crisis.

Furthermore, Pakistan is characterised by high power distance (Riaz et al., 2021), high uncertainty avoidance (Islam, 2012), and an in-group collectivist culture. Power distance refers to the degree to which a society accepts hierarchical power distribution within organizations, where employees in high power distance cultures like Malaysia, Pakistan, China, and Mexico anticipate one-way communication (top-to-bottom) from their superiors. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the tendency of employees in a culture to avoid ambiguous and uncertain situations, seeking refuge in established norms and bureaucratic procedures (Hofstede, 1980). In in-group collectivist cultures, individuals harbour pride and loyalty towards the group or organization, striving collectively. Examples of such cultures include Turkey and China. Conversely, individuals in

individualistic cultures like Germany, the USA, and Australia tend to maintain looser relationships with their interactions (Farndale and Sanders, 2017)

Employee attitudes and behaviours are inevitably shaped by their values and emotions, which are rooted in national culture (Hofstede, 1980). Various HRM studies have documented the important role that national cultural values play in determining employee perceptions and behaviours (see Farndale and Sanders, 2017; Jahanzeb and Mohanty, 2019). Studies on HRM system strength, even those that have not directly incorporated culture as a variable in their research models, have nevertheless discussed and emphasised the significance of cultural values in their findings (see Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011). Conversely, a limited number of studies examining HRM system strength within the Pakistani context have identified specific contextual factors that both promote and constrain organisational practices. For instance, research conducted by Babar et al., (2022) explored religiosity (individual religious beliefs that motivate individuals at work) as a boundary condition in moderating the effect of HRM system strength on the relationship between performance appraisal quality and employee performance. The findings revealed that the relationship between performance appraisal quality and employee performance is strongest in the presence of high perceived HRM system strength and low religiosity, or conversely, within low perceived HRM system strength and high religiosity. This suggests a compensatory effect of these two variables within the Pakistani context, which may in certain instances constrain the impact of HRM system strength.

Given that the Covid-19 crisis is relatively recent, the HRM literature concerning this aspect is not yet fully developed. However, one of the few studies that have considered the impact of crises within the framework of HRM system strength is by Sanders et al., (2024). This research, conducted across 15 countries during the Covid-19 pandemic, examined how the severity of the crisis and an organization's reputation (factors influencing managers' motivation) on one hand, and national cultural values of uncertainty avoidance and power distance (managers' general beliefs) on the other hand, influenced the extent to which managers provided distinctiveness, consistency, and consensual information (HR system strength) to employees during times of crisis. The study suggested that the positive effects of crisis severity and organization's reputation on the employment of HR system strength were stronger in high uncertainty avoidance countries but weaker in high power distance countries. This indicates that

certain contextual aspects may promote the adoption of HRM system strength while others might constrain it.

Given the focus of this research on employee perceptions (HRM system strength) and behaviours (affective commitment and OCB), the impact of national cultural values in Pakistani organizations and the global Covid-19 crisis were considered in discussing the study's results, aiming to deepen understanding of the research findings.

2.10 Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

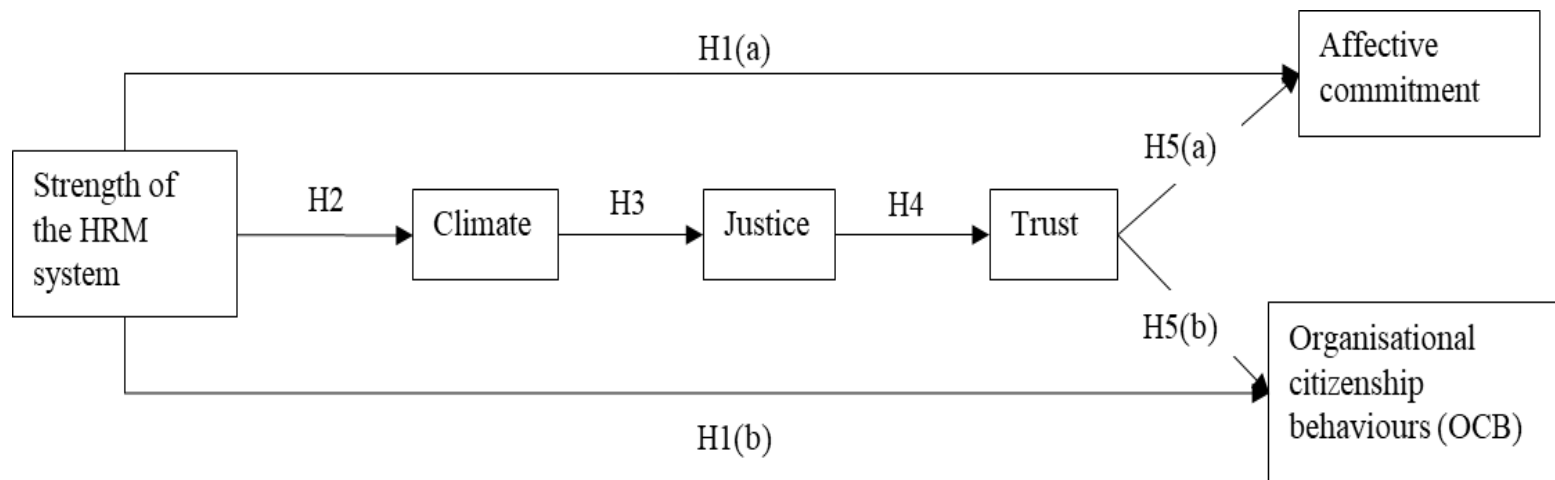


Figure 2-2; conceptual framework and research hypotheses (H1-H5)

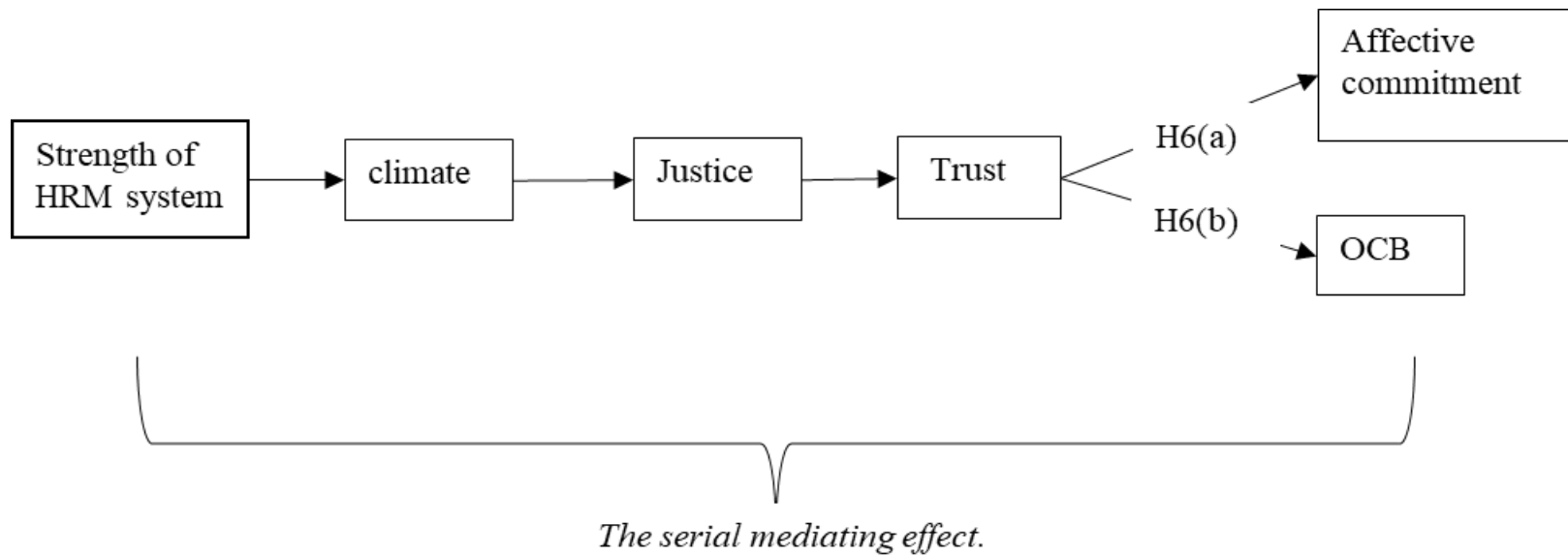


Figure 2-3: Conceptual framework and research hypothesis H6.

3 Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In line with the preceding chapter, the study endeavours to assess the relationship among the strength of the HRM system, affective commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) by considering serial mediation of HR climate, organizational justice, and organizational trust. This conceptual model was formulated based on existing literature to discern the interconnections among the variables and foster comprehension regarding the linkage between the respective points within the relationship.

This chapter is dedicated to elucidating and justifying the decisions pertaining to research philosophy, research design, and research method in order to investigate the aforementioned relationships. Additionally, it outlines the research workflow required for conducting this study. Furthermore, the chapter expounds on the research context, sampling procedures, and sampling strategy. It also elaborates on the procedures and outcomes of the pilot study. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the research measurement and instruments utilised to identify the key variables of the study. Furthermore, it addresses the ethical considerations inherent in the research process at each stage. Finally, this chapter explicates the quantitative methods employed for data analysis aimed at deriving research findings.

3.2 Research Approach: research philosophy, research design, and research method

Research approaches encompass procedures and plans for conducting research, spanning from underlying assumptions to methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Creswell and Creswell, (2017) propose a research framework comprising three main approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (refer to Figure 3-1). Researchers must carefully deliberate on these approaches and choose the most appropriate one for their study. Given the intricacy of this research, adopting an informed research approach is paramount to ensure the reliability and validity of research findings and information. An informed research

approach comprises three key components: research philosophy, research design, and research method (see Figure 3-1).

The methodological choices of this study are delineated in Figure 3-2, illustrating that the research was conducted using Creswell and Creswell's research framework with a quantitative research approach. This approach encompasses a postpositive philosophy, quantitative design, and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. Subsequent sections will elucidate the rationale behind selecting the quantitative approach for this study.

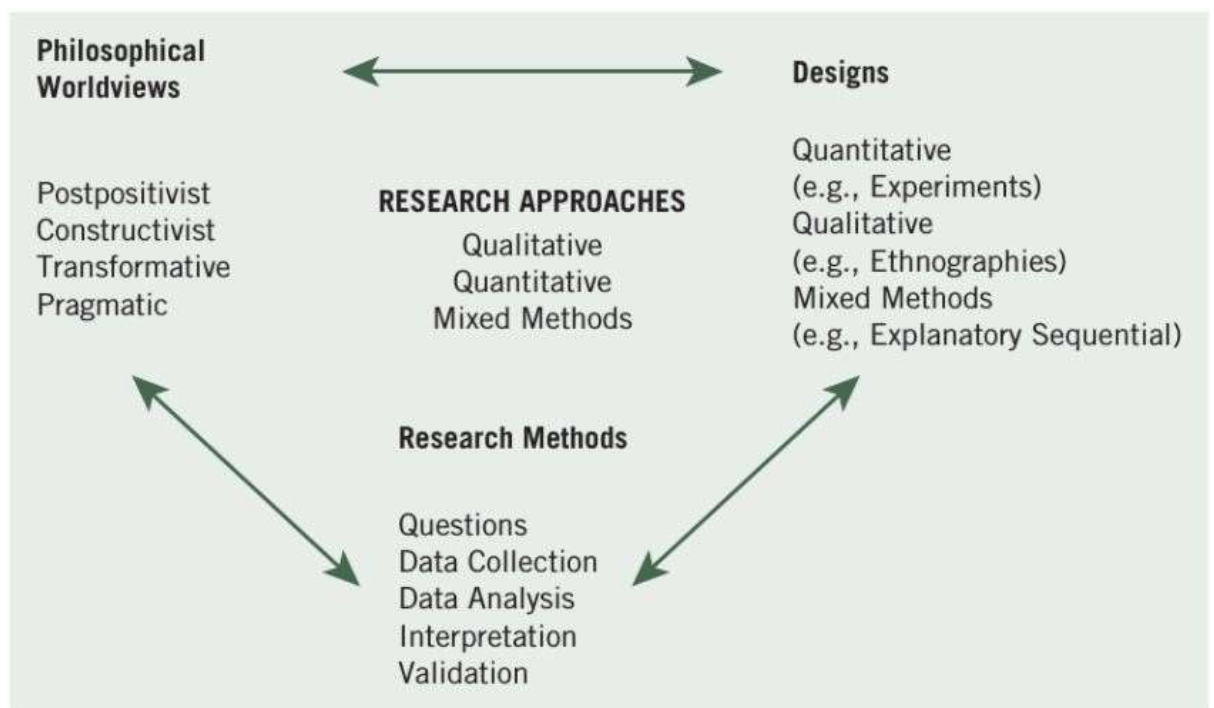


Figure 3-1: Framework of research. Source: Creswell and Creswell, (2017)

3.3 Research philosophy- philosophical worldviews

The first component of the research framework is a research philosophy. A researcher's philosophical assumptions influence the research practice, as it is how a researcher sees the relationship between the absolute truth or knowledge and the process by which it is produced. Scholars believe that there are two significant assumptions for developing knowledge (Creswell, 2007). The first is ontology, which means the nature of reality. A researcher's ontological assumption shapes the aims and objectives of their research.

Research ontology is the researcher's perspective or view of reality, which could either be subjective or objective. Subjective ontology assumes that social actors (people)' perceptions are needed to understand the social phenomenon and it is in a constant state of flux and revision. In contrast, objective ontology believes that social phenomenon is an independent reality and exists external to social actors. Objectivists assume that there is only one true social reality that is experienced by all social actors (Saunders et al., 2019).

The ontological stance of this research is linked more towards objectivism rather than subjectivism. Considering the theme of this research, which is focusing on the strength of the HRM system or employees' perceptions surrounding HR content. Thereby in an organisational context, the strength of the HRM system is a one true social reality that is independent and is being experienced by all social actors (employees and managers). Such as the study believes that HR content implemented in the organisation is interpreted and experienced the same by all employees as highly distinctive, consistent, and consensual which further influences their outcomes. Thereby, objectivism seems to be a more appropriate ontological stance for this thesis.

Although the subjective ontology believes that social phenomena being employee perceptions or strength of the HRM system are implanted by social actors being employees and managers of the organisation. However, this research views employee perceptions (social phenomena) as an independent entity or object that will influence employee commitment and OCB. This research's ontological stance cannot be viewed as subjectivism. As the study has collected data from one point in time and believes that the strength of the HRM system (absolute truth) is constant and is not in the state of revision. This assumption contradicts the stance of subjectivists which assume that social phenomenon is in a constant state of flux and revision, thereby this thesis cannot have subjective ontology but rather seems to be more aligned with objective ontology.



Figure 3-2: Overview of the methodology choices made to conduct this research.

The second assumption for building knowledge is called epistemology, which is defined as how we came to know the knowledge or truth (Saunders et al., 2019). Generally, there are many paradigms of epistemology in literature but, Creswell and Creswell, (2017) have suggested four paradigms; Post-positivism, Constructivism, Transformative, and Pragmatism (see figure 3-1). Instead of using the term research paradigms, Creswell and Creswell, (2017) have used the term “philosophical worldviews” which means, *basic sets of beliefs that guide action*. The worldviews are the ways researcher figures out the reality and, how knowledge is produced. The researchers usually built orientations regarding philosophical worldviews based on their research discipline, research field, past experiences, and research objective that they are trying to investigate.

Postpositivism	Constructivism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination • Reductionism • Empirical observation and measurement • Theory verification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Multiple participant meanings • Social and historical construction • Theory generation
Transformative	Pragmatism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political • Power and justice oriented • Collaborative • Change-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequences of actions • Problem-centered • Pluralistic • Real-world practice oriented

Figure 3-3: Philosophical Worldviews Source: Creswell and Creswell, (2017)

As this study's ontological stance is objectivism, the epistemological philosophical paradigm best suited for this research is post-positivism, sometimes referred to as *empirical science*. According to Creswell and Creswell, (2017) research that is conducted through a post-positivist lens has features of determination, reductionism, empirical observation, and theory verification (see Figure 3-3). The following paragraphs explain how all these elements of post-positivist worldviews are linked with this research.

Post-positivism is considered a deterministic philosophy wherein researchers focus on identifying the causes that determine outcomes. The current thesis aims to discern the effect of HRM system strength (cause) on employee behaviours (outcome). The study posits that the strength of the HRM system (distinctiveness, consistency, consensus) influences and prompts employees to exhibit positive behaviours, such as affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB). The concern highlighted by post-positivists underscores the necessity to investigate the causes influencing outcomes, akin to those found in experiments, thus rendering them deterministic. Therefore, the thesis aligns best with deterministic philosophy as it endeavours to identify and evaluate the causes influencing outcomes.

Furthermore, post-positivists are often characterized as reductionists, aiming to break down ideas into small sets for testing, such as variables that form hypotheses and research questions (Creswell, 2007). Post-positivists posit that the role of research is to test theories through hypotheses to acquire additional knowledge (Philips and Burbules, 2000). This thesis adopts the principle of reductionism by developing

multiple hypotheses to test the conceptual framework derived from existing theories in the literature. The research draws upon the theories of the HRM system proposed by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), as well as the social exchange theory (Blau, 1963), as the foundation of the framework. These theories are utilized to construct a conceptual framework comprising multiple variables. Subsequently, hypotheses are formulated based on this framework, which will be tested and validated to generate further insights and knowledge.

Furthermore, the information that develops through a post-positivism lens is analysed through statistical measurements (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Philips and Burbules, (2000) argued that data, evidence, and rational consideration shapes the knowledge in post-positivist research. Therefore, to identify and conclude the findings of this research, the study has used statistical measurements. Statistical measurements adopted in this research are discussed further in this chapter.

Last, according to the post-positivism view, the main concern of the research is theory verification (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). A deductive approach is used when the research aims to verify theories. Saunders et al., (2019) argued that when existing theories are used to form the direction of the research to collect data and, obtain additional knowledge, a deductive approach should be applied. A post-positivist researcher will start with the theory, collect measurements and observations that either refuse or support the theory, and then make revisions or conduct additional tests as required thus, moving from top to down. Similarly, this research started with a theory of HRM system and social exchange, created a conceptual framework using those theories and linking them with various variables present in the literature, collected statistical data, and conducted statistical analysis on the data to conclude the findings, hence it can be argued that this thesis is positioned within the postpositivist worldview.

3.4 Research Design and Research Method

A researcher's ontology and epistemology play a crucial role in selecting a particular type of research design and research methods. Understanding the distinction between them is essential. A research design offers a specific framework for procedures to be executed in the research study, while research methods encompass procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and validating data (Creswell, 2007). Before delving into research methods, it is important to first consider research designs.

According to the research framework proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2017), as depicted in Figure 3-1, there are three acceptable research designs: quantitative design, qualitative design, and mixed-method design. Studies that are quantitatively designed are those that invoke post-positivism epistemology and objective ontology. The quantitative design comprises three strategies: experimental, non-experimental, and longitudinal designs. Researchers' choice of a particular design depends on the type of research problem they are trying to solve (Saunders et al., 2019).

When considering the purpose and objectives of this research, it seems to be more aligned with the non-experimental strategy under the quantitative design. As mentioned before, the objective of the thesis is to explore causation and measure the degree of association between multiple key variables of the study. Therefore, studies that are trying to investigate causation and association, such as this one, are best suited to adopt a non-experimental quantitative research design (Creswell and Creswell, 2017), for example, a survey. A survey provides numeric descriptions of trends and attitudes within a population by studying a sample of the population (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Previous studies, such as those by Sanders et al., (2008), Li et al., (2011), Katou, (2013), and Cafferkey et al, (2019) which have investigated similar research objectives to this thesis, have adopted a quantitative design- (*survey*) to conduct their research. Additionally, Saunders et al., (2019) suggest that research that is based on analysing and measuring causal relationships among variables (such as this one) is preferred to use quantitative design to determine the objective reality. Thus, this thesis used a quantitative design such as a survey to test research objectives and hypotheses. Further discussion regarding the procedures of the research survey adopted in this study is presented in section 3.7 of this chapter.

Research methods encompassed procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and validating data (refer to Figure 3-1). As this study's research design is quantitative so the research method used to collect data was also quantitative. Such as, data were collected using pre-determined scales and instrument-based questions. The gathered information was numeric, and data collection occurred at a single point in time. The thesis conducted statistical analyses and provided interpretations of the findings. Subsequent sections in this chapter delved into the research methods employed in this study for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and validation.

As mentioned before, research methods are procedures to collect, analyse, interpret, and validate the data (see Figure 3-1). So, in this quantitative research, data was collected using a pre-determined scale and instrument-based questions. The information gathered is numeric and the data collection was at one point in time. The thesis conducted a statistical analysis and performed statistical interpretations of the findings. The following sections in this chapter will discuss further research methods used in this study to collect, analyse, interpret, and validate the data.

In sum, this research is conducted using a quantitative approach, which is based on post-positivism philosophy, non-experimental design (survey), and used quantitative methods to collect, validate, analyse, and interpret data to evaluate the hypotheses and test the conceptual framework of this study.

3.5 The flow of the research

Figure 3-4 provides an overview of the flow of the research, starting with stage 1 of verifying theories, to stage 5 of data analysis.

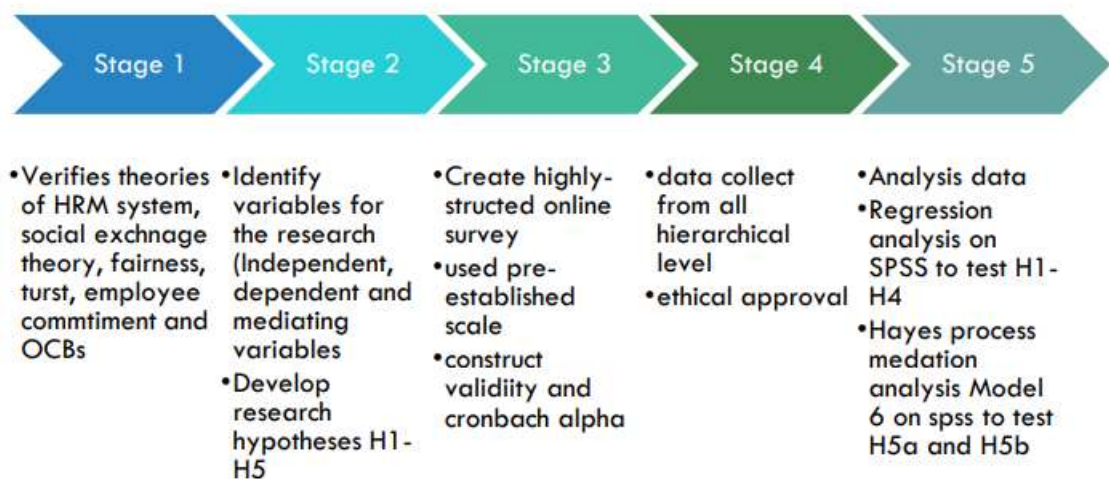


Figure 3-4; Stages of this research.

First, the research began with pre-established and verified theories of HRM that focus on the HRM system, employee behaviours, and social exchange theory which led the study to identify variables of the research as follows.

1. *Dependent variables* (DVs) are employees' affective commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB). Affective commitment is considered as one dimension (Meyer and Allen, 1990). While OCB is classified into five categories: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue (Organ,1988), the five dimensions of OCB were collectively observed as one variable in this research.
2. *Independent variable* (IV) is the strength of the HRM system, which consists of three dimensions of attribution theory including distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). These three features were collectively treated as one independent variable of the study.
3. Next, *control variables* are the demographic and job characteristics of the research participants, such as age, gender, level of education, job tenure, and job role.
4. Last, the *mediating variables* are HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust. In general, mediating variables link the start and endpoint of a relationship, and their presence explains the relationship between them. HR Climate is observed as a single variable. Organisational justice is subcategorised into four variables: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice (Colquitt et al.,2001) and they are collectively treated as one variable in the study. Furthermore, organisational trust is identified as a single dimension (Robinson, 1996).

Second, this research establishes hypotheses that explore the potential relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The initial hypotheses, H1(a) and H1(b), examine the connections between the HRM system strength, affective commitment, and OCB. Subsequently, Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5 propose relationships between the mediating variables, such as the association between HR climate and organizational justice, organizational justice and organizational trust, and organizational trust and affective commitment and OCB. Lastly, hypothesis 6 postulates that HR climate, justice, and trust serve as sequential mediators between the HRM system strength and affective commitment and OCB.

Third, to confirm the hypotheses, a highly structured survey questionnaire was created (see Appendix B) using instruments and pre-established scales. The instrument's

construct validity and item reliability were statistically evaluated using the Cronbach alpha test and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

Fourth, data collection was from a large-scale manufacturing organisation operating in Pakistan, the data was collected from all levels of white-collar employees working at the main operational site of the organisation. Procedures of data collection are discussed further in this chapter.

The final stage involved data analysis, which aimed to test hypotheses predicting causal relationships and sequential mediation. The data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, and the findings of the study were derived from this analysis. Detailed explanations of the data analysis procedures and results are discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis document.

3.6 Participating organisation and sample strategy

This research was conducted at the operational site of a large manufacturing organisation in Pakistan. The organisation produces home appliances and electronic goods and employs approximately 4000-5000 individuals. It maintains a diverse portfolio, operating in sectors such as tiles manufacturing, motors and metals, power and energy generation, technology solutions, and e-commerce. As a privately owned entity, the organisation operates from a singular main operational site, overseeing business management and operations, alongside several other production and storage facilities.

The data were collected from employees working exclusively in white-collar positions at the main operational branch. Conversely, blue-collar industrial workers at various production sites were excluded from the research sample. It is noteworthy that this research was conducted during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when most production sites were closed, resulting in limited access to industrial workers. Additionally, the organization was downsizing, with many blue-collar employees in factories facing job losses.

Nevertheless, this research yields valuable findings since the participants consisted of white-collar employees. The HR content implemented in the participating organization is tailored for managing office-based employees performing white-collar jobs. In contrast, the management system in factories primarily relies on informal HR practices to oversee industrial workers. Therefore, excluding blue-collar industrial workers from

a research sample does not impact the research results, as industrial workers were not the intended target audience for whom High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) in this organisation were designed.

The sample employees that formed the research sample were 865 employees. It is preferable to have a bigger sample size because it provides more acute and precise results (Brymen and Bell, 2011). White-collar employees were chosen for this research due to their clear understanding of the organization's HR strategy and content, particularly the High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS).

The sample employees were skilled individuals employed in various operational departments of the company, including production and engineering, operations, marketing and sales, human resources, finance, and, legal. Research participants encompassed employees from all hierarchical levels within the operational branch, including senior managers, middle managers, and employees from each department. Most of the employees were temporarily working from home at that time due to the pandemic (COVID-19). It is noteworthy that the sample employees possessed a proficient understanding of the English language, obviating the need for translating the survey into Urdu, the local language spoken in Pakistan.

To collect data, this research has adopted probability sampling because it is considered more effective than non-probability sampling due to its ability to offer an accurate representation of the population. Moreover, findings from non-probability sampling methods cannot be generalised (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Thereby, this study has adopted simple random probability sampling, wherein each employee has an equal chance to be selected for the research sample.

The researcher designed a sampling frame based on the departments operating within the main operational branch, and then within those departments survey was randomly distributed to employees. To ensure unbiased participant selection, a clear and defined population size was identified using information available in the company's database. The sampling frame was then constructed based on data such as employee number, job role (senior manager, line manager, and employee), and department (production and engineering, operations, marketing and sales, human resources, finance, and legal)

A randomisation process was implemented, utilizing computer-generated random numbers to select participants for the research sample. This procedure ensures that selection is truly random and free from bias. Subsequently, a clear email was sent to

invite 865 sample participants to partake in the research, with reminder emails sent at intervals. This effort resulted in a 36% response rate. Throughout the research, the anonymity of the participants was ensured and maintained.

Despite the researcher's efforts to ensure the selection of unbiased participants in this research, it acknowledges the drawbacks associated with using random probability sampling, such as sampling frame error. This research relied on the database of the participating organisation to create its sampling frame, assuming that it is up-to-date and accurate. However, if the database is outdated or incomplete, it can introduce bias into the sample. Furthermore, when adopting random probability sampling, there is always a risk of respondents not participating in the research, which can compromise the representation of the sample at times. Despite these drawback, probability sampling remains a widely accepted approach to conducting research, and a trusted method for ensuring the true representation of the population and obtaining unbiased participants. (Brymen and Bell, 2011).

3.7 Quantitative design- survey.

As previously elucidated, this research employs a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship and association between the key variables of the study. Thus, an online survey was utilised for data collection. The decision to employ web-based surveys was motivated by the ease of data collection, particularly amidst the strict COVID-19 social distancing restrictions imposed by the government. Additionally, online surveys are more cost-effective to design and manage compared to surveys sent by post. Moreover, an online survey facilitates research participants in completing their surveys with ease and without bias.

Conducting face-to-face structured interviews during the pandemic proved challenging due to government-imposed social distancing and lockdown measures in response to COVID-19. Furthermore, face-to-face or telephonic interviews are time-consuming, while online surveys offer a quicker data collection process, enabling data to be gathered within a short timeframe. Moreover, self-administered questionnaires are ideal for measuring attitudes and opinions that are not readily observable (Nardi, 2014), making an online survey well-suited for this research.

However, when utilizing an online survey, there is a possibility of encountering a low response rate, potentially as low as 30% (Nardi, 2014). This issue was encountered by the present research during a pilot study, as discussed in Section 3.8. To address this

concern in the actual and final research phase, consistent reminders were sent to the research participants by the HR manager of the participating organization to complete the survey and engage in the research process. A total of six reminder emails were dispatched, spaced three weeks apart. Consequently, by the survey's closure, a response rate of 36% was achieved. Notably, this response rate surpassed the average response rate observed in many HRM and management studies (e.g., Mellahi and Hairris, 2016).

The online survey comprises seven sections, demographic questions, questions regarding the HRM system strength, HR climate questions, justice questions, trust questions, affective commitment questions, and OCB questions (see Appendix B). The questions are structured in a closed-ended format. The data format is a numeric description of the behaviours of employees in the organisation. The online survey was managed by Qualtrics, it is a web-based software used to create and manage online surveys.

The study used pre-established scales to create an online survey. Minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire to address limitations inherent in online surveys, such as the inability of participants to seek clarification on any issues encountered while completing the survey. Consequently, the researcher ensured that the survey questions were clear and comprehensible to the participants. Moreover, efforts were made to ensure that the slight alterations to a few words did not compromise the original meaning of the questions developed by the authors of the scales, thus safeguarding the validity and reliability of the survey instruments. For instance, the scale employed for measuring organisational justice in this research was developed by Colquitt et al., (2001) with items including, "Has (he/she) refrained from improper remarks or comments", the researcher rephrased it as, "Has your manager refrained from improper remarks or comments". The survey questions are presented in Appendix B. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the consistency and reliability of the instruments and scales used to examine the conceptual framework of this study, as further discussed in the next section 3.8.

In addition, this research adhered to ethical procedures at every stage. An information sheet was provided to the research participants to explain the nature and scope of the research (see Appendix A). Furthermore, employees who expressed willingness to participate were required to sign a consent form before their involvement in the study. Ethical procedures are further elaborated upon in the ethical section of this chapter.

3.8 Pilot research

3.8.1 Purpose and Procedure of Pilot Study

Before conducting field research in the participating organisation, this research conducted a pilot study. It was necessary to ensure that the instruments and scales selected for this research were consistent and reliable for testing the conceptual model of this study (see literature review chapter). Therefore, a pilot was conducted through an online survey using Qualtrics software. Data were collected from a small firm that shares similar characteristics to the organisation selected for conducting final and actual research.

The management of the pilot organisation was approached through personal contact, and then the survey was randomly distributed to their employees. By the closing of the survey, a total of 38 responses were recorded. Unfortunately, out of 38, five surveys were not completed satisfactorily, so they were removed from the data analysis resulting in a total of 33 responses.

3.8.2 Measures for a pilot study

Survey questionnaires for the pilot were created using the pre-established and published scale for each variable (see Table 3-1) and were later intended to be used for data collection in actual research at large manufacturing organisation. In addition, a five-point Likert scale was used for all items, with response items ranging from 1= strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree. Each of the variables was measured at the individual level except for the HR climate. This study had initially planned to investigate climate at the unit level rather than at the individual level (Ostroff and Bowen, 2016) so in order to measure climate, this study was following the procedures conducted by Li et al., (2011).

Li et al., (2011) have used the scale developed by Sun et al., (2007), which covers five HPWS practices; training, internal promotion, employee participation, result orientation pays, and job security. Next, an HPWS index was developed where the sum of item scores for each of the five practices was averaged and then an average was calculated across the five practices. And then an inverse of the standard deviation of the HPWS index at the unit level was calculated to measure the HR climate in a department.

Construct	Dimensions	Authors
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Features of the HRM system	Distinctiveness	Delmott et al.,2012
	Consistency	
	Consensus	
HR Climate	Inverse deviation of HPWS index	Li et al., (2011)
Justice	Distributive	Colquitt et al (2001)
	Procedural	
	Interpersonal	
	Informational	
Trust	Organisational trust	Robinson, (1996)
Commitment	Affective commitment	(Allen and Meyer, 1990)
OCB	Altruism	Niehoff and Moorman (1993)
	Courtesy	
	Sportsmanship	
	Conscientiousness	
	Civic Virtue	

Table 3-1; Scales for pilot research

3.8.3 Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion of a pilot study

IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software was used to analyse pilot data. First, descriptive and frequency statistics test was calculated on SPSS. The dataset included 20 males (60.6%) and 13 females (39.4%), with the majority of them belonging to the age group of 20-30 years (St. D =0.747). In addition, 51.5% of the respondents were working in the organisation for about 1- 3 years, over 18.2% had a qualification of master's degree, and 42.4% had an undergraduate academic degree.

Next, to investigate the consistency of the survey instrument, the following procedures were considered. First, the research used pre-established scales and validated items for questionnaires used in the survey, thus establishing content validity. Next, construct internal consistency was investigated by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α). The test results show that all alphas' values were greater than .70 (see Table 3-4), which means the instruments used are reliable for testing the conceptual framework. Thus, it can be concluded that the survey scales used in this research are appropriate, valid, reliable, and ready to be sent out for final research in a large-scale organisation.

In addition, further statistical tests were conducted on pilot data, such as a correlation test of the key variables. Before conducting a correlation test on key variables of the study, the researcher had to ensure that the data set covered all its assumptions. For example, one assumption to conducting such a test is that data should be normally distributed. Therefore, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Normality tests (See table 3-2) were conducted for each variable. Results show that each variable is normally distributed except trust, where $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ significance value. Thus, the null hypothesis for trust data was accepted that the data set is not normally distributed. To further investigate normality in trust data, the following procedures were considered.

First, the researcher identified that there is a smaller difference between the mean value = 2.7706 and the median value = 2.8571 of trust (See Table 3-3). Second, the researcher calculated z score of Skewness (-0.506+ 0.409=-0.097) and Kurtosis (0.739+0.798=1.537) which falls between values +/- 1.96 (see Table 3-3). Third, the study identified that the majority of the dots on the Q-Q plot diagram are closer to the line (see Figure 3-5). Thus, considering these indicators and analysis of normality, the researcher concluded that the data for trust is approximately normally distributed in terms of skewness and kurtosis. Thus, it is acceptable for conducting a correlation test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
STRENGTH OF THE HRM SYSTEM	.101	33	.200*	.970	33	.476
JUSTICE	.120	33	.200*	.960	33	.265
TRUST	.234	33	.000	.870	33	.001
COMMITMENT	.150	33	.057	.944	33	.089
OCB	.134	33	.139	.955	33	.180

Table 3-2: Test of normality. *. This is a lower bound of the true significances.

Descriptives		
	Statistic	Std. Error

TRUST	Mean		2.7706	.16223
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.4401	
		Upper Bound	3.1010	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.7670	
	Median		2.8571	
	Variance		.869	
	Std. Deviation		.93196	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		.64	
	Skewness		-.506	.409
	Kurtosis		.739	.798

Table 3-3; Descriptives test of Trust

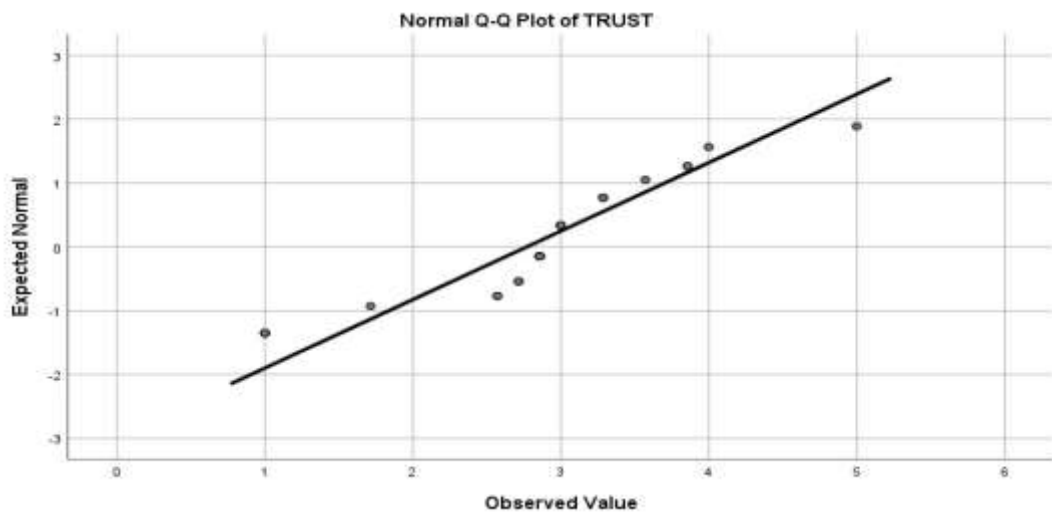


Figure 3-5; Q-Q plot of trust variable.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age-1	1.39	.747	-								
Gender-2	.39	.496	0.24	-							
Job Tenure-3	1.85	.870	0.29	-0.08	-						
Education-4	2.30	1.334	0.03	0.24	0.10	-					
Strength of the HRM system-5	2.8502	.76588	0.30	0.06	0.19	0.05	(0.90)				
Justice-6	2.63	1.07	0.11	-0.16	0.36*	0.08*	0.74**	(0.94)			
Trust -7	2.7706	.93196	-0.33	-0.13	0.24	0.04	0.48**	0.60**	(0.85)		
Commitment -8	3.1586	.81590	0.05	-0.04	0.32	0.15	0.47**	0.56**	0.73**	(0.75)	
OCB-9	11.02	3.41	-0.02	-0.05	-0.07	0.01	0.41*	0.42*	0.62**	0.37*	(0.89)

Table 3-4; correlation, Mean, SD value, of key variables of the pilot study. Cronbach alpha values are represented diagonally.

Table 3-4 presents the correlation coefficients of all constructs used in the pilot study. Correlation tells associations among variables and a positive, strong, and significant correlation was seen among all the key variables of the study. Thus, supporting the research objectives and indicating that the research is moving in the right direction. The data suggest that the strength of the HRM system is positively correlated with affective commitment ($r=0.47$, $p < 0.001$) and OCB ($r=0.41$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, the result shows that justice has a strong relationship with trust ($r=0.6$, $p < 0.001$). This supports the study's theoretical assumptions that organisational justice will positively influence organisational trust (Colquitt et al., 2012). Moreover, the result shows that employee behaviours, commitment ($r=0.73$, $p < 0.001$), and OCB ($r=0.62$, $P < 0.001$) have a strong and positive relationship with trust. Thus, it can be concluded that correlation results support the research's assumptions for the relationships within the research framework.

3.8.4 Conclusion of the pilot study

Three conclusions were drawn from the pilot research. Firstly, the instruments utilised in the pilot are deemed reliable and can be employed for the final research, aligning with the primary objective of conducting the pilot study. Secondly, the correlation results are as anticipated, with a positive correlation observed among all key variables, thereby substantiating the assumptions made in developing the study's conceptual framework. Consequently, this outcome signifies a positive trajectory for the research to progress further.

Thirdly, a conclusion was drawn to measure climate at an individual level rather than at a unit level. This decision stemmed from the challenges encountered in executing higher levels of analysis, such as unit-level analysis, to identify climate due to the small sample size and low response rate of pilot data. Additionally, the researcher faced issues in performing such analyses on SPSS software due to the complexities of multi-level analysis and the smaller sample size. Therefore, to circumvent potential issues in the final and actual research, the researcher planned to measure climate at a micro level rather than a macro level by employing the pre-established scale by Kinnie et al., (2005). Moreover, to gain a broader understanding of the influence of the strength of the HRM system, akin to many other studies, this research planned not to examine climate as a higher-level construct (see Katou, 2013; Cafferkey et al., 2019).

The study has adopted a scale developed by Kinnie et al. (2005) to identify HR climate because a strong climate is referred to a situation where employees have positive, clear, and uniform perceptions about HR content. In a broader context, this indicates that in a strong climate, satisfaction among employees towards HR content will be high (Zhang and Agarwal, 2012) due to a clearer and uniform understanding of HR practices implemented in the organisation. The scale developed by Kinnie et al., (2005) measured the satisfactory perceptions of employees regarding HR content such as items that include, “overall, how satisfied are you with your current career opportunity”. Therefore, positive responses to these items helped the researcher identify the existence of a strong climate in the participating organization.

Moreover, Katou, (2013) used the scale developed by Kinnie et al., (2005) to identify a HR climate. The study conducted by Katou, (2013) shared a similar research framework to this thesis, it examined the mediating role of HR climate, justice, and trust between the HRM system and multiple employee outcomes in the country Greece. Thus, this research followed the work of Katou, (2013) who used the same scale as Kinnie et al., (2005) to measure HR climate.

3.9 Measures and Instruments for final and actual research

Following a pilot study, the appropriate measures and instruments for the actual research were selected. Table 3-5 provides a summary of the measuring instruments used for each variable in the final research, including the authors who developed the scales and the specific sub-scales utilised. The rationale for selecting these particular scales is discussed in the previous chapter of the literature review.

The survey document used a five-point Likert ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The five-point Likert scale was used rather than the seven-point because this approach is more respondent-friendly and more accessible for them to use and understand (Braunsberger and Gates, 2009). Respondents were required to click on the word (strongly agree- strongly disagree) that corresponds to their condition right now.

Construct	Dimensions	Authors
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Strength of the HRM system	Distinctiveness	Delmott et al.,2012
	Consistency	
	Consensus	
HR Climate	Career opportunities	Kinnie et al., (2005)
	Training	
	Reward	
	Performance appraisal	
	Involvement	
	Communication	
	Openness	
	Work-life balance	
	Performance related pay	
Justice	Distributive	Colquitt et al (2001)
	Procedural	
	Interpersonal	
	Informational	
Trust	Organisational trust	Robinson, (1996)
Commitment	Affective commitment	(Allen and Meyer, 1990)
OCB	Altruism	Niehoff and Moorman (1993)
	Courtesy	
	Sportsmanship	
	Conscientiousness	
	Civic Virtue	

Table 3-5; Scales used in the final study.

3.9.1 HRM strength

Strength of the HRM system were identified using three dimensions provided by Bowen and Ostroff (2004); distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). For distinctiveness, a thirteen-item scale developed by Delmott et al. (2012) was used. Items include, “In this organisation, employee experience implemented HPWS/HR practices as relevant”. Moreover, for consistency, a thirteen-item scale by Delmott et al. (2012) was used. Items include “The HPWS/HR practices implanted in this organisation sounds good in theory but does not function in practices (R)” and “The HPWS/HR practices are developed in such a way that desired performance is reinforced”. Furthermore, a five-item scale modified by Delmott et al. (2012) was used to measure consensus such as, “The HR manager and line managers are clearly on the same wavelength regarding HPWS/HR practices” and “Top manager and HR manager clearly share the same vision regarding HPWS/HR practices”. Finally, items were measured on a scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree.

3.9.2 HR Climate

The climate (i.e., how HR content is perceived by the employees) was identified using a fifteen-item scale by Kinnie et al. (2005). Items were measured on a scale ranging from 1- extremely dissatisfied to 5 extremely satisfied. An example of items includes, “overall, how satisfied are you with your current career opportunity”, “how satisfied do you feel with your training at your current job” and, “overall how satisfied are you with the influence you have in the company decision that affect your job or work?”.

3.9.3 Organisational Justice

Organisational justice was composed of four sub-scales: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. This research used a scale developed by Colquitt et al. (2001) to measure each sub-scale. Items were measured on a scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Distributive justice was identified using a four-item scale; an example of an item includes, “Does your outcome (promotion, rewards, etc.) reflect the effect you have put into your work”. Furthermore, procedural justice was measured using the seven-item scale; an example of an item includes, “Have those procedures been free of bias”. While interpersonal justice was identified using a four-item scale. Items include, “Has your

manager treated you with respect”. Moreover, to measure informational justice, a five-item scale was used. Examples of items include, “Has your manager explained decision-making procedures thoroughly”.

3.9.4 Organisational Trust

Organisational trust is identified by using the seven-item scale developed by Robinson (1996). Items were measured on a scale ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Examples of Items are, “I believe that my organisation has high integrity” and “My organisation is not always honest and trustful”.

3.9.5 Affective commitment

Affective commitment is identified by using the eight-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). This scale’s items were measured ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. An example of items includes, “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation” and “I really feel as if these organisational problems are my own”.

3.9.6 Organisational citizenship behaviours

OCB was measured using five dimensions from Niehoff and Moorman (1993). This scale covers 20 items, including four items for altruism, four for courtesy, four for sportsmanship, four for conscientiousness, and four for Civic Virtue. The items were measured ranging from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Example of Items of altruism includes “I help others who have heavy workload”. An example of an item for courtesy includes, “I do not abuse the right of others”. Besides that, the item for sportsmanship includes, “I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters (R)”. Items for conscientiousness include “I am always punctual”. And last items for Civic Virtue include, “I keep up with the developments in the company”.

3.9.7 Control variables.

For control variables, the study used individual characteristics and organisational characteristics. According to Robbins and Judge (2015), the accomplishment of HRM practice, such as in this research case HPWS, is influenced by individual, work, and organisational characteristics. Therefore, this study uses control variables, including age, gender, and education, as individual features while job tenure and job role are categorised as organisational components.

3.10 Data Analysis Method

In order to determine the relationships, associations, and mediation, as highlighted in the research objectives, aims, and hypotheses, the study analysed quantitative data collected from the survey. The quantitative data collected signifies various types of variables which are categorised as nominal, ordinal, and interval (Field, 2017). Nominal variables are represented by values that have no order, such as gender and a few other demographic questions asked in this research survey (see Appendix B). Ordinal variables are represented by data that has no defined interval such as questions that are answered through Likert scales, as the majority of the questions are in this research survey. While interval variables are represented by data that is equal in interval such as questions that are answered by selecting the range of number, and tenure (1-3 years, or 3-6 years) like question Q7 of the survey (see Appendix B).

To explore the relationship between the strength of the HRM system, climate, justice, trust affective commitment, and OCB the study applied various statistical tools. The data was analysed through IBM SPSS software version 26, using the add-on Amos version 26 and Hayes PROCESS. The statistical test includes CFA, Cronbach alpha, Person correlations, simple and multiple regression analysis, and last model n.6 for PROCESS macro.

Data Screening: Before the data analysis, the data was cleaned. Initially, the entire data was analysed using mean and standard deviation. Missing variables were checked, and outliers were removed. Next, skewness, kurtosis, and normality of the data were assessed.

Description of data: Entire data was examined using Mean, Median, Standard deviation, and correlation among the key variables of the study.

Analysis construct's reliability: To ensure that measurements or instruments used to measure the study's variables are reliable and can be used for further testing, a reliability scale analysis was conducted, i.e., Cronbach alpha.

Confirmatory Factor analysis (CFA) is conducted to test or confirm a proposed theory or hypothesis about factors that are considered to exist before. CFA helped the study identify a good fit with the data. The study conducted CFA to check the goodness of fit model and measure the study's scale validity.

Hypotheses testing: To test hypotheses H1-H5, the study used various regression analyses. Linear Regression analysis helps determine the relationship between one independent variable on a dependent variable. So, the relationship between the strength of the HRM system with commitment indicated in Hypothesis 1(a) was tested and then the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and OCB as indicated in H1(b) was tested using the same statistical tool. Next, hypothesis 2 (strength of the HRM system on HR climate), hypothesis 3 (HR climate on justice), hypothesis 4 (justice on trust), and hypothesis 5 (trust on affective commitment and trust OCB) were also tested using the regression analysis in SPSS.

Mediation Analysis. To test the sequential mediation, which is hypothesis 6 of the study, the Hayes Process supported by SPSS version 26 was used. This approach is more appropriate because it can identify serial rather than parallel mediation between independent and dependent variables. Parallel mediators are two or more mediators in a model who mediate the relationship between the same independent and dependent variables but have no significant relationship or association between themselves. Therefore, unlike the simple mediation model or parallel mediation model, the sequential mediation model assumes that besides independent and dependent variables, there is also a causal relationship among the two or more mediators in a model (Hayes, 2012). The study adopted Model 6 of the Hayes process supported by SPSS. The objective was to investigate the direct and indirect effect of the HRM system on employee outcomes while modelling a process in which the HRM system causes HR climate, which in turn causes fairness/justice, which then causes trust, resulting in affective commitment and OCB.

3.11 Ethical consideration

This research project obtained ethical approval from the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) at the university. Prior to conducting field research, it is mandatory for all research projects to receive ethical approval from CREC. Therefore, this study obtained ethical approval before commencing data collection, allowing for the collection of data for both the pilot and actual research phases.

Throughout the research, clear ethical procedures were followed based on the Nottingham Trent University research ethics framework. Initially, a generic email was sent to the HR manager of the participating organisation, providing an explanation of the research objectives along with an online survey link and

information/consent forms. This ensured that the organisation was aware of the ethical procedures employed in this study before data collection commenced. Additionally, measures were taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity for both the employees and the organisation. This involved ensuring that the names of employees and the participating organisation were not disclosed. The HR managers who assisted in distributing the survey had no access to the survey results or information regarding the number of employees who participated in the research.

The survey link included information about the research and consent forms for the participants. Prior to completing the survey questions, participants were required to provide informed consent by clicking on the "I agree" button. The information and consent forms provided details about the study's objectives, the type of data collected, participants' right to withdraw their data within a specified timeframe, and the protection of any personal data collected during the survey. Upon concluding the research project and obtaining the research findings and results, the survey data was securely destroyed.

4 Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

The chapter provides quantitative findings of the study. The first section explains the data cleaning process and descriptive analysis. The following sections provide information regarding scale reliability, validity, model fit using Cronbach alpha (α), and confirmatory factor analysis. The next section explains the correlation results of the key variable of the study. The last two sections explain the results of the regression analysis and mediation analysis which were performed to test the hypotheses of the study.

4.2 General results

To start the data analysis process, the data was first downloaded from Qualtrics software, a tool for creating and distributing online surveys and then it was correctly added into the software SPSS for the data analysis. Before, the process of data analysis, the study ensured to perform data cleaning. The process of data cleaning refers to the process of checking for missing values, outliers, and assumptions for multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2018). It is often overlooked by researchers as it is time-consuming. However, data cleaning is very essential to perform before conducting complex statistical analysis. Therefore, the missing values and outliers were checked from the data. Missing values are the incomplete responses to the survey questions by the research participants. While outliers are responses that are distinctively different from other observations (Field, 2017). The missing values were handled, and outliers were removed from the analysis so the most accurate results could be produced. The study found four outliers and they were removed from the total number of responses, resulting in 311 valid responses out of 315 received. Furthermore, assumptions of parametric tests were checked and corrected such as normality and homoscedasticity of the data.

Once the data was clean and coded, the study performed descriptive and frequency statistics tests to determine the demographic characteristics of the responses as shown in Table 4-1 below. The table provides information regarding the frequency and percentage of the responses for control variables of the study, such as age, gender, education, job role, and tenure. The dataset included 186 males (59.8%) and 125 females (40.2%), with the majority of the respondents (32.8%) belonging to the age group of 20-30 years old (St. D = 1.08). The results are as expected as there is more

male workforce in the manufacturing sector of Pakistan than females (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics(b), 2021). In addition, 39.2% of the respondents were working in the organisation for about 1- 3 years, and 25.1% are with the organisation for more than 6 years. The data set indicates that 37.6% of the employees have a qualification of master’s degree and 20.3% have other qualifications. The sample includes 25.6% of the participants from the operations, marketing, and sales departments, 25.1% from the finance department, 21.2% from the human resource department, 15.1 % from production and engineering, and 12.9% from legal. The respondents were senior managers (21.5%), middle managers (41.2 %), and non-managerial employees (37.3 %).

Age	No of response	Percentage %
20-30	102	32.8
30-40	88	28.3
40-50	69	22.2
>50	52	16.7
Total	311	100.0
Gender	No of response	Percentage %
Male	186	59.8
Female	125	40.2
Total	311	100.0
Education	No of response	Percentage %
Under-Graduate	93	29.9
Masters	117	37.6
M.Phil./ PhD	38	12.2
Other-Qualifications	63	20.3
Total	311	100.0
Job-role	No of response	Percentage %
Senior management	67	21.5

Middle management/ Line manager	128	41.2
Non-managerial employees	116	37.3
Total	311	100.0
Tenure	No of response	Percentage %
less than 1 year	59	19.0
1-3 years	122	39.2
3-6 years	52	16.7
more than 6 years	78	25.1
Total	311	100.0

Table 4-1; Response by Demographic

4.3 Scale reliability and Model Fit.

As noted in the methodology chapter, this research has used pre-established and validated scales to identify the constructs of the study thus, establishing content validity. In addition, the construct's internal consistency was investigated using the statistical test Cronbach alpha (α). The rule of thumb is that if the (α) value is higher than 0.7, it is assumed that scales are reliable (Nunnally, 1978). Moreover, the study conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the scale validity using SPSS Amos version 26. Current research has used six scales to identify the six variables of the study: strength of the HRM system, HR climate, organisational justice, organisational trust, affective commitment, and OCB. The following sections provide Cronbach alpha(α) of each scale and CFA results.

The scale for HRM system strength has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.776, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is reliable. Furthermore, the confirmatory factor analysis of strength of HRM the system indicates a good fit with the data, but few indexes were slightly below the threshold as indicated by the fitness statistic (CMIN/DF= 1.858, CFI= 0.816, GFI =0.961, AGFI=0.840, IFI =0.829, NFI= 0.640, PGFI=0.748, RMSE=0.053).

Moving on to the scale for HR Climate, it has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.839, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is reliable. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis of climate indicates a good fit with the data, but few indexes were slightly below the threshold as indicated by the fitness statistic (CMIN/DF= 2.595, CFI= 0.857, GFI =0.901, AGFI=0.868, IFI =0.859, NFI= 0.789 PGFI=0.676, RMSE=0.072).

The scale for organisational justice has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.917, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is highly reliable. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis of organisational justice indicates a very good fit with the data, as indicated by the fitness statistic (CMIN/DF= 1.489, CFI= 0.970, GFI =0.929, AGFI=0.909, IFI =0.970, NFI= 0.914, PGFI=0.726, RMSE=0.040).

Furthermore, the scale for trust has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.780, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is highly reliable. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis of trust indicates a good fit with the data, as indicated by the fitness statistic (CMIN/DF= 3.393, CFI= 0.929, GFI =0.952, AGFI=0.905, IFI =0.930, NFI= 0.903, PGFI=0.476, RMSE=0.088).

The scale for affective commitment has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.802, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is highly reliable. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis of affective commitment indicates a good fit with the data, as indicated by the fitness statistic. (CMIN/DF= 3.169, CFI= 0.929, GFI =0.946, AGFI=0.903, IFI =0.930, NFI= 0.901, PGFI=0.526, RMSE=0.084).

Last, the scale for OCB has a Cronbach alpha (α) value of 0.706, which is greater than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), therefore survey instrument used to identify this construct is reliable. In addition, the confirmatory factor analysis of OCB indicates a good fit with the data, as indicated by the fitness statistic (CMIN/DF= 1.534, CFI= 0.851, GFI =0.926, AGFI=0.903, IFI =0.858, NFI= 0.678, PGFI=0.705, RMSE=0.042).

In sum, the results of Cronbach alpha (α) indicate a very high internal consistency of organisational justice (α = 0.917) and good internal consistency for the remaining variables of the study with (α) values greater than 0.7. On the other hand, confirmatory factor analysis indicates a good fit model for all variables of the study.

4.4 Mean, standard deviation, and correlation.

The mean, standard deviation, and correlation of the variables of the study are displayed in Table 4-2 below. A correlation is the association between two variables (Field, 2018), and the Pearson correlation statistical test is used to determine the strength of a linear relationship between two variables (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

According to the correlation results indicated in Table 4-2, a positive and significant relationship can be seen between strength of the HRM system and affective commitment ($r=0.470$, $p<0.01$) and OCB ($r=0.268$, $p<0.01$). Besides that, a positive relationship can also be seen between affective commitment and OCB ($r=0.352$, $p<0.01$). Furthermore, a positive and significant relationship can be seen between strength of the HRM system and Climate ($r=0.497$, $p<0.01$). Moreover, the relationship between climate and organisational justice is positive and significant ($r=0.440$, $p<0.01$). The strongest, positive, and significant relationship can be seen between organisational justice and trust ($r=0.548$, $p<0.01$). In addition, positive and significant relationships can be seen between trust and affective commitment ($r=0.512$, $p<0.01$) and OCB ($r=0.474$, $p<0.01$).

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Age	2.23	1.082	1										
Gender	1.40	.491	.197**	1									
Education	2.23	1.088	.254**	-.015	1								
Tenure	2.49	1.074	.315**	.130*	.137*	1							
Job-role.	2.09	.763	.107	.029	.091	.015	1						
Strength-of-HRM system	4.22	.301	.038	-.021	-.030	-.024	.071	(.776)					
HR Climate	4.12	.481	.016	-.033	-.010	-.102	.058	.497**	(.839)				
Justice	4.17	.523	.041	.026	-.008	-.109	.003	.393**	.440**	(.917)			
Trust	4.12	.567	.160**	.058	.029	-.038	.096	.342**	.370**	.548**	(.780)		
Commitment	3.93	.648	.186**	.030	.088	.054	.094	.470**	.474**	.465**	.512**	(.802)	
OCB	4.21	.342	.080	.011	-.011	.022	.033	.268**	.282**	.328**	.474**	.352**	(.706)

Table 4-2; Mean, standard deviation, Correlation, Cronbach Alpha. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.5 Hypotheses testing (H1-H5)- Regression Analysis

The study conducted simple linear regression which is an extension of the Pearson correlation test to examine the hypotheses H1 to H5 of the study as shown in Figure 4-1. The regression analysis helps in predicting how much variance is being accounted for in a single dependent variable based on the independent variable. In other words, simple linear regression helps determine the prediction of one variable on another while, correlation determines the association between two variables. Therefore, besides correlation analysis, the study performed regression tests to determine the influence of one variable on another. The regression results are presented in Table 4-3.

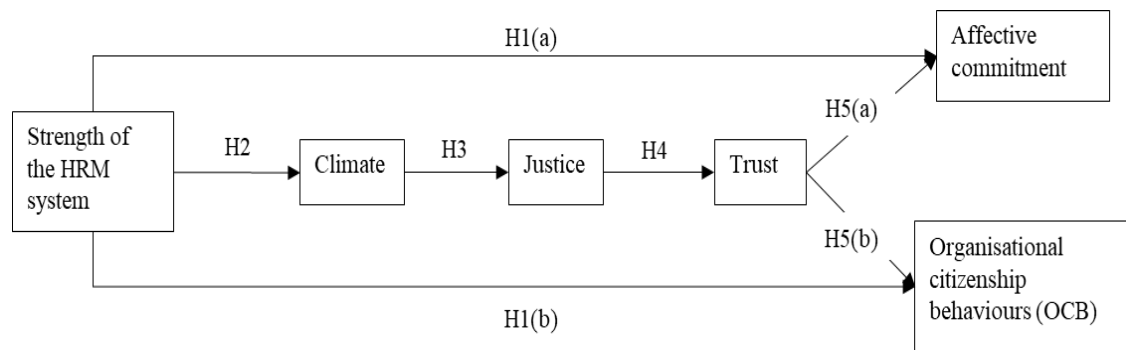


Figure 4-1: Hypotheses (H1-H5) of the study- All supported.

4.5.1 Relationship of HRM system strength with affective commitment, and OCB

Hypothesis 1 of the study noted that H1: *strength of the HRM system have a positive impact on H1(a) affective commitment and H1(b) OCB*. To test H1(a), the dependent variable (affective commitment) was regressed on the independent variable (strength of the HRM system). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 85.397$, $P < 0.001$. Furthermore, the value of $R^2 = 0.217$ which indicates that features of the HRM

system explain 21.7% of the variance on affective commitment. Thereby, the results revealed that HRM system strength has a significant and positive impact on affective commitment ($\beta = 1.010$, $t= 9.241$, $p < 0.001$). Hence H1(a) is supported.

On the other hand, to test H1(b) the dependent variable (OCB) was regressed on the independent variable (strength of the HRM system). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 23.955$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, the HRM system strength accounts for 7.2% of the variance on OCB and it significantly and positively impacts OCB ($\beta = 0.305$, $t=4.894$, $p < 0.001$). Hence H1(b) is supported.

4.5.2 Relationship of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus with affective commitment, and OCB

To further understand the relationship noted in hypothesis 1 of the study, the researcher examines the individual impact of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (features of the HRM system) on affective commitment and OCB using multiple regression. Multiple regression is performed when there is more than one independent variable in a regression model (unlike simple-linear regression). The multiple regression analysis helps in predicting how much variance is being accounted for in a single dependent variable based on the three independent variables.

The dependent variable (affective commitment) was regressed on three independent variables (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant and independent variables predict the dependent variable in the model, $F(3,307) = 37.771$, $P < 0.001$. In addition, the value of $R^2 = 0.270$, which indicates that the model explains 27% of the variance on affective commitment. Furthermore, the coefficient was further assessed to determine the influence of each factor on the dependent variable (affective commitment). The regression results revealed that distinctiveness has a significant and positive impact on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.611$, $t=6.511$, $p < 0.001$), consistency has a significant and positive impact on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.401$, $t=4.153$, $p < 0.001$), consensus does not have a significant and positive impact on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.184$, $t=2.270$, $p=0.024$).

In the second case, the dependent variable (OCB) was regressed on independent variables (distinctiveness, consistency, consensus). The results reveal that overall, the regressed

model is significant and independent variables predict the dependent variable in the model, $F(3,307) = 14.157$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, the $R^2 = 0.122$ which indicates that the model explains 12.2% of the variance on OCB. Furthermore, the coefficient was further assessed to determine the influence of each factor on the dependent variable (OCB). The regression results revealed that distinctiveness has a significant and positive impact on OCB ($B=0.254$, $t=4.713$, $p < 0.001$), consistency does not have a significant and positive impact on OCB ($\beta = 0.127$, $t=2.268$, $p=0.24$), consensus does not have a significant and positive impact on OCB ($B=0.009$, $t=0.192$, $p=0.848$).

4.5.3 Relationship between HRM system strength and HR Climate

In the next regression model, the dependent variable (HR Climate) was regressed on the independent variable (strength of the HRM system). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 101.463$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the $R^2 = 0.247$ which indicates that the model explains 24.7% of the variance on HR Climate. Hypothesis 2 of the study noted that *H2: strength of HRM system has a positive impact on HR Climate*. The regression results revealed that strength of the HRM system has a significant and positive impact on HR climate ($\beta = 0.794$, $t=10.073$, $p < 0.001$). Hence H2 is supported.

4.5.4 Relationship of HR Climate with organisational justice.

Moving on to the next relationship between Climate and organisational justice. In this simple regression model, the dependent variable (organisational justice) was regressed on the independent variable (Climate). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 72.152$, $p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the $R^2 = 0.189$ which indicates that climate explains 18.9% of the variance on organisational justice. Hypothesis 2 of the study noted that *H2: Climate has a positive impact on organisational justice*. The regression results revealed that climate has a significant and positive impact on organisational justice ($\beta = 0.487$, $t= 8.494$, $p < 0.001$), Hence H3 supported.

4.5.5 Relationship of organisational justice with organisational trust.

In the next regression model, the dependent variable (trust) was regressed on the independent variable (organisational justice). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the

model, $F(1,309) = 135.146, p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the $R^2 = 0.304$ which indicates that organisational justice explains 30.4% of the variance on organisational trust. Hypothesis 3 of the study noted that H4: organisational justice *has a positive impact on organisational trust*. The regression results revealed that organisational justice has a significant and positive impact on organisational trust ($\beta = 0.593, t = 11.625, p < 0.001$), Hence H4 supported.

4.5.6 Relationship of organisational trust with affective commitment and OCB

In the next regression model, the dependent variable (affective commitment) was regressed on the independent variable (trust). The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 109.578, p < 0.001$. Furthermore, the $R^2 = 0.262$ which indicates that trust explains 26.2% of the variance on affective commitment. Hypothesis 5 of the study noted that H4: trust *has a positive impact h5(a) affective commitment h5(b) OCB*. The regression results revealed that trust has a significant and positive impact on affective commitment ($\beta = 0.590, t = 10.468, p < 0.001$), Hence H5(a) supported.

On the other hand, to determine H5(b), the dependent variable (OCB) was regressed on the independent variable (trust) in the model. The results reveal that overall, the regressed model is significant, and the independent variable predicts the dependent variable in the model, $F(1,309) = 89.618, p < 0.001$. In addition, the trust accounts for 22.5% of the variance on OCB and it significantly and positively predicts OCB ($\beta = 0.286, t = 9.467, p < 0.001$). Hence support H5(b).

Hypotheses	Regression weights	β	t	p-value
H1(a)	HRMS-AC	1.010	9.241	<0.001
R²	0.217			
H1(b)	HRMS-OCB	0.305	4.894	<0.001
R²	0.072			
H2	HRMS-C	0.794	10.073	<0.001
R²	0.247			
H3	C-OJ	0.478	8.494	<0.001

R²		0.189			
H4	OJ-OT		0.593	11.625	<0.001
R²		0.304			
H5(a)	OT-AC		0.590	10.468	<0.001
R²		0.262			
H5(b)	OT-OCB		0.286	9.467	<0.001
R²		0.225			

. Table 4-3; Regression results. Note, HRMS: HRM system strength, C: Climate, OJ; organisational justice, OT organisational trust, AC: affective commitment, OCB; Organisational citizenship behaviours.

4.6 Hypotheses testing (H6)- Serial Mediation Analysis

Mediation is the situation when the relationship between a predictor and outcome can be explained by their relationship with the third variable (Field, 2018). Current research has three mediating variables that are linked serially in a causal sequence represented in Figure 11. PROCESS is the statistical tool available as an add-on for mediation analysis in SPSS. This tool allows mediators in a model to serially link in a casual sequence rather than only in parallel (Hayes et al., 2012). This eliminates the need for the researcher to be familiarised with multiple tools that perform only a single specialised task as PROCESS is designed to do it all. Such as PROCESS will measure the effect size (indirect effect) in both single and multiple variable models so, this tool suits well to test the last hypothesis of the study.

The last and sixth hypothesis of the study noted as H6: Climate, justice, and trust sequentially mediate the relationship between features of the HRM system, H6(a) affective commitment, and H6(b) OCB. To test serial mediation, model no 6 of the PROCESS Macro was used. Model 6 incorporates total effect and bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effects based on the 5000 resamples. Bootstrapping is a more comprehensive and reliable assessment of indirect effects (Cafferkey et al., 2019) and does not make unrealistic assumptions about the normality of the sampling distribution. The significance of the indirect effect is determined when zero does not appear in the confidence interval (Edwards and Lamberts 2007). As the study has two dependent

variables affective commitment and OCB so, the PROCESS mediation analysis was performed on the research mode twice with each of the two different outcome variables to determine H6(a) and H6(b).

In the first model, HRM system strength was selected as the independent variable, affective commitment as the dependent variable, shared climate as mediator 1, justice as mediator 2, and trust as mediator 3. To check if mediation has occurred, the value of the direct and indirect effects is observed. The value of indirect effect indicates the amount of mediation through relevant mediators. Since zero does not appear in the confidence interval (0.0227, 0.0798) the results revealed a significant indirect effect of strength of the HRM system on affective commitment, through climate, justice, and trust ($\beta = 0.0471$, $t = 3.204$).

However, the direct effect of features of the HRM system on affective commitment in the presence of mediators was also found significant ($\beta = 0.4683$, $p < 0.001$). Since the direct effect is also significant so, it means that some of the effects are passing directly from strength of the HRM system to affective commitment, while some of the effects of features of the HRM system are passing through the path of climate, justice, and trust to commitment. This detracts from the significance of the link between HRM system strength on climate, climate on justice, justice on trust, and trust on commitment. Climate, justice, and trust therefore partially mediate the influence between HRM system strength and affective commitment. Thereby, it can be concluded that hypothesis 5(a) is partially supported.

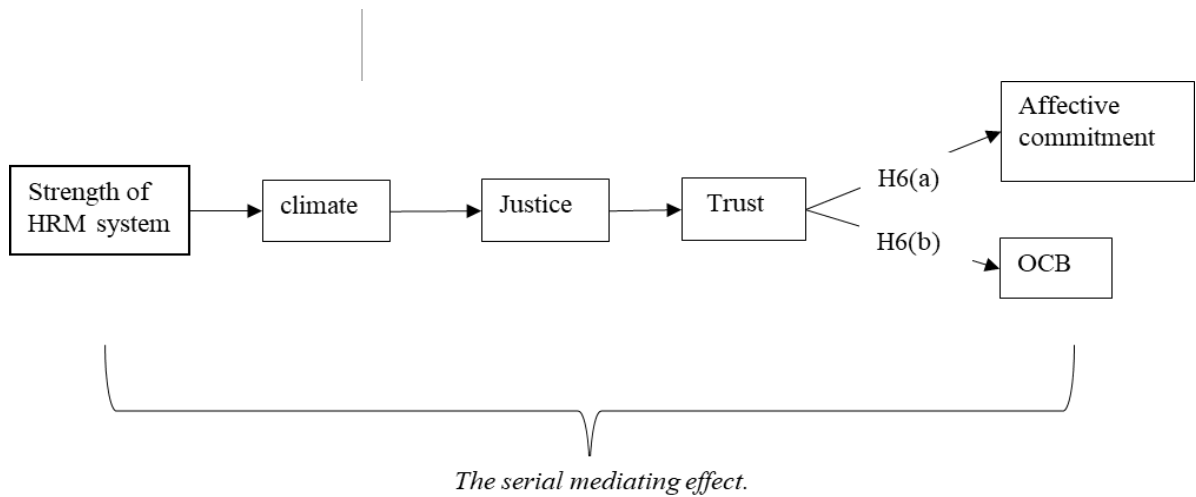


Figure 4-2; Serial mediation of climate, justice, and trust between the strength of the HRM system and affective commitment-hypothesis 6(a) and H6(b)

Relationship	Indirect effect	LLCI	ULCI	t	Conclusion
FHRM→C→OJ→OT→AC	.0471	.0227	.0798	3.204	Partial mediation

Table 4-4; Mediation Analysis Summary, note t-statistic is calculated by dividing indirect effect by SE=0.0147

Table 4-5 below provides an alternative or indirect path for sequence mediation analysis between the strength of the HRM system and affective commitment. The results revealed that there was no mediation to be found in paths 2,3 and 4. In path 2, justice was treated as a single mediator between two points and the result indicates justice does not mediate the relationship. Similarly, path 3 indicates that trust alone does not mediate the relationship between strength of the HRM system and commitment. Furthermore, path 4 revealed that climate and justice do not sequentially mediate the relationship between predictor and outcome variables. Thus, strengthening the study’s claim that three mediators are needed to exist in sequence to contribute influence of HRM system strength on affective commitment.

Total, direct, and indirect effect	Effect(β)	SE
Total effect	1.0098	0.1093
Direct effect	0.4683	0.1139

Total Indirect effect 0.5416 0.0876

Indirect effect of different paths		Effect(β)	SE	Mediation
1	Strength of HRM → Climate → Commitment	0.220	0.556	Mediation
2	Strength of HRM → Justice → Commitment	0.060	0.038	No Mediation
3	Strength of HRM → Trust → Commitment	0.068	0.039	No mediation
4	Strength of HRM → Climate → Justice → Commitment	0.042	0.025	No Mediation
5	Strength of HRM → Climate → Trust → Commitment	0.037	0.019	Mediation
6	Strength of HRM → Justice → Trust → Commitment	0.067	0.024	Mediation
7	Strength of HRM → Climate → Justice → Trust → Commitment	0.047	0.015	Mediation

Table 4-5; Total, direct, and Indirect effect(s) of strength of HRM system (X) on commitment (Y)

In the second model strength of the HRM system was selected as an independent variable, OCB as the dependent variable, climate as mediator 1, justice as mediator 2, and trust as mediator 3. Since zero does not appear in the confidence interval (0.0162, 0.0546) the results revealed a significant indirect effect of features of the HRM system on OCB, through climate, justice, and trust ($\beta = 0.0326$, $t = 3.26$) thus mediation has occurred. In addition, the direct effect of strength of the HRM system on OCB in the presence of mediators was found to be not significant ($\beta = 0.0858$, $p = 0.2023$). Since the direct effect is not significant, it means that the effect is not passing directly from strength of the HRM system to OCB in the presence of mediators, while all of the effects of features of the HRM system are passing through the path of climate, justice, and trust to OCB. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is full mediation and hypothesis 6(b) is fully supported.

Relationship	Indirect effect	LLCI	ULCI	t	Conclusion
FHRM→C→OJ→OT→OCB	.0326	.0162	.0546	3.26	Full mediation

Table 4-6 Mediation Analysis Summary, note t-statistic is calculated by dividing indirect effect by SE=0.0100

Table 4-7 below provides an alternative path or indirect effect for sequential mediation analysis between the strength of the HRM system and OCB. The results revealed that there was no mediation to be found in paths 1,2,3 and 4. In path 1, the climate was treated as a single mediator between two points and the result indicates climate does not mediate the relationship. Similarly, paths 2 and 3 indicate that justice alone and trust alone do not mediate the relationship between strength of the HRM system and OCB. Furthermore, path 4 revealed that climate and justice do not sequentially mediate the relationship between predictor and outcome variables. Thus, strengthening the study's claim that three of these mediators need to exist in sequence to contribute influence of HRM system strength on OCB.

Total, direct, and indirect effects		Effects(β)	SE	
Total effect		0.3049	0.0623	
Direct effect		0.0858	0.0671	
Total Indirect effect		0.2191	0.0452	

Path	Indirect effects of different paths	Effect(β)	SE	Mediation
1	Strength HRM→Climate→OCB	0.044	0.034	No Mediation
2	Strength HRM→ Justice→ OCB	0.014	0.017	No Mediation
3	Strength HRM→ Trust→ OCB	0.047	0.026	No Mediation
4	Strength HRM→ Climate→ Justice→ OCB	0.010	0.012	No Mediation
5	Strength HRM→ Climate→ Trust → OCB	0.026	0.012	Mediation

6	Strength HRM → Justice → Trust → OCB	0.047	0.016	Mediation
7	Strength HRM → Climate → Justice → Trust → OCB	0.033	0.010	Mediation

Table 4-7 Total, direct, and Indirect effect(s) of features of HRM system on OCB

5 Chapter Five: | Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of this research and is structured according to the two research questions of the study. The chapter begins with a general discussion of the overall results. The following section further discusses and elaborates on the quantitative findings that are relevant to research question one and hypothesis 1 of the study. Finally, the last section discusses findings related to research question two and hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the study.

5.2 Discussion

The core objective of the study was to propose and test a conceptual framework. The framework aimed to examine the influence of HRM system strength on the study's two dependent variables: affective commitment and OCB. Furthermore, the model explored the potential mediating influence of HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust. The research sample consisted of employees in white-collar positions within the main operational branch of a large manufacturing organisation.

The findings of the study indicate that the results strongly support the underlying concept behind the development of the study's theoretical framework. Specifically, six out of six hypotheses were fully to partially supported.

The research provides valuable insights into our understanding of the strength of the HRM system and its impact on employee attitudes, particularly affective commitment, and OCB. The results suggested that the strength of the HRM system is crucial to consider in addition to implementing strategic HRM practices (high-performance-work-system) when explaining the levels of OCB and affective commitment. This finding of the study adds value to the work of HR process researchers (Nishii et al., 2008; Sanders et al., 2008; Cafferkey et al., 2019; Heffernan et al., 2022), who have criticised the one-sided focus of HR content and emphasised the significance of HR process-oriented approach in the HRM-outcome debate.

Regarding the first objective, the study supports and even enriches the work of Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) as it found that distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus have combined predictive value on affective commitment and OCB (*hypothesis 1- accepted*). The findings

reveal that the HRM system strength holds a unique character that can assist and facilitate, clear and coherent messages from the organisation to its employees, specifically regarding HR content and its purposes. Under such circumstances, employee's commitment and citizenship behaviours are engendered.

However, it is important to note that the influence of each feature of the HRM system (individually) might vary across cultures, industries, and contexts. In this case, it is interesting to note the absence of an impact of consistency on OCB and, the significance of consensus on affective commitment and OCB. Although this might not be the case in other cultures and industries. This suggests that under certain conditions or culture tightness, some features of the HRM system might have a non-linear effect, as consensus and internal consistency regarding HR content may become irrelevant because employee behaviours and perceptions are strongly controlled and governed by the extreme level of cultural tightness and high uncertainty conditions (during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Furthermore, the findings shed light on the significance of the perceptions of distinctiveness regarding HR content in the Pakistani context. The results suggest that distinctiveness among the features of the HRM system has the strongest influence on both employee behaviours. Therefore, if a firm in a tight society intends to establish affective commitment and OCB, they need to ensure the HPWS are visible and relevant to employee goals. The distinctiveness of HPWS can be achieved and increased through regular communication of information about new practices to the employees and ensuring that high degree of empathy and sensitivity for employees' goals and values. Considering the value system is particularly important in tight cultures such as Pakistan, where cultural values and norms are strongly shared among employees. Farndale and Sanders, (2017) suggested that the strength of the HRM system is complimented by cultural tightness and looseness, which can influence employee attitude and performance in specific cultures. Thus, the intended performance of the organisation can be achieved once, employees in tight cultures, exhibit a high level of commitment and OCB which is encouraged through HR content being visible to the employees.

Concerning the second objective of the study, the data suggest that HR climate, justice, and trust serially mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcome (affective commitment and OCB) (*hypothesis 6- accepted*). Although

the strength of the HRM system is beneficial to both organisation and employees, its effect on employee behaviours largely depends on HR climate, fairness perception, and trust in the organisation. The results suggest that employees make sense and attach meaning to HR content when there is an effective utilisation of the strength of the HRM system (*hypothesis 2- accepted*). This strong situation, in turn, develops and fosters organisational justice (*hypothesis 3- accepted*). The study supports the notion by Zhang and Agarwal, (2009), Frenkel et al., (2012a), and Katou, (2013) that, a situation where employees have a clear understanding and satisfaction towards HR content promotes the perceptions of fairness in the organisation. The results further revealed that organisational justice reinforced through HR climate, becomes antecedent to trust in the organisation (*hypothesis 4- accepted*). The trust in the organisation finally contributes to employee affective commitment and OCB (*hypothesis 5 accepted*). In short, the study suggests that interlinked three mediators help in better alignment of employee perception (HRM system strength) with employee behaviours (affective commitment and OCB). The following section further elaborates and discusses the findings based on the research question and each hypothesis of the study.

In regard to the context, Zhang and Agarwal., (2009) stated that the HRM system is context-dependent and the models that seek to investigate the relationship between the HR system and employee behaviours should take this into account. Thereby HRM system strength studies have also acknowledged the contextual effect on their results, including research conducted in European, Chinese, and Malaysian settings (see, Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011; Cafferkey et al., 2019; De la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020; Heffernan et al., 2022). The present research was conducted in the Pakistani culture within the private manufacturing sector. As such, this study recognises and addresses the influence of national culture and the pandemic as contextual factors on the findings of this research.

5.3 Research question One: Does the strength of the HRM system individually and collectively affect employee commitment and OCB?

To address the first research question of this study, the researcher has developed hypothesis H1 as previously explained. Hypothesis H1 noted that *the strength of the HRM system is positively related to H1(a) affective commitment and H1(b) OCB*. The data revealed that the strength of the HRM system has a direct impact on employee affective commitment and OCB (see Figure 5-1). Based on the results, it is evident that the features

of the HRM system, when considered collectively, significantly predict, and influence affective commitment and OCB among employees in the Pakistani context. These findings affirm the importance and value of employees' understanding and perceptions of HR content, thereby enriching the HR process-oriented approach to uncovering the black box phenomenon.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that employees demonstrate a higher level of commitment and exhibit greater citizenship behaviour when the HR content implemented within their organisation is able to communicate its intent which captures employees' interest. This emphasizes the crucial role of the HRM system, specifically the strength of the HRM system, in sending clear signals to employees regarding distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus of HR content. It aligns with the theoretical assumptions put forth by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Nishi et al. (2008), highlighting the significance of communication and attribution, in fostering positive employee behaviours.

In addition, the findings of this research align with previous empirical studies that have found a direct impact of HRM system strength on employee attitudes and behaviours, in various cultural settings such as the Netherlands (Sanders et al, 2008), China (Li et al., 2011), Germany (Hauff et al., 2017), Malaysia (Cafferkey et al., 2019; Heffernan et al, 2022) and Spain (de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). Consequently, this research enhances the importance and relevance of the strength of the HRM system, regardless of the specific HR practices. It sheds light on a crucial aspect that has often been neglected in HRM studies, where the sole focus is on HR content, while communicating properties of HRM systems are ignored.

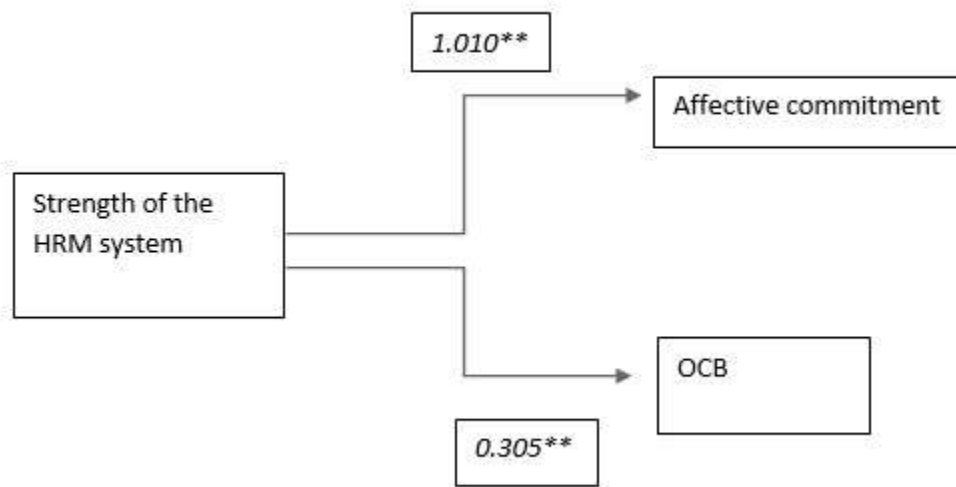


Figure 5-1: Model of the impact of the strength of the HRM System (as combined) on employee commitment and OCB

Moving forward with the discussion, to further develop insight and understanding of HRM system strength, this study examines the impact of dimensions of HRM system strength (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) on both employee outcomes. Contrary to the researcher's expectation, the research did not find that the three features of the HRM system individually predict employee behaviours (See Figure 5-2). The study's data indicates that consensus, perceived as an agreement among HR policymakers, does not significantly influence affective commitment and OCB. These findings contradict the theoretical perspective of HRM system theory (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), which assumes that HR content exhibiting perceptions of consensus in senior management will develop reliability within the organization and foster positive employee behaviours. On the other hand, when there is low consensus in an organisation, employees would view HR content as an ambiguous HR strategy and will be unclear about the expected behavioural norms, thus resulting in undesirable employee behaviours.

The findings of the study reinforce that, features of the HRM system are context-dependent (Frenkel et al., 2012a), and the development and influence of HRM system strength are sensitive to the organisational sector and national culture (Frardale and

Sanders, 2017). Therefore, Pakistani culture might be a reason for the consensus to have a non-significant relationship with affective commitment and OCB.

For instance, in Western cultures, particularly in the manufacturing industry, where power distance is low and employees can openly disagree with managers' perspectives, perceptions of consensus between line-manager and HR managers encourage reliability and influence employee outcomes. However, in Pakistani culture, characterized by a tight society (Frardale and Sanders, 2017) and high-power distance, employees are expected to have constrained relationships with their superiors (line managers or senior managers). Consequently, the consensus among HR policymakers in such cultures does not establish the reliability and has a lesser influence on employee behaviours. In high power distance societies, particularly in the manufacturing sector, managers with authority are seldom questioned about their decisions, particularly when managers use quality of social relationships and favouritism rather than objective criteria to evaluate performance, offer promotions and bonuses. Thereby, the consensus among management might be viewed as unsupportive and irrelevant to the employees.

Additionally, job security was a major concern for individuals across all industrial sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic, as companies underwent downsizing. The severe conditions and high levels of uncertainty may explain why consensus is deemed irrelevant by manufacturing employees and fails to influence employee behaviours (affective commitment and OCB) in this context.

Although the results contradict the theory of HRM system strength provided by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), the findings of the study are actually in line with other empirical studies. For instance, Sanders et al., (2008) found no relationship between consensus with affective commitment in the Netherlands context. Similarly, Cafferkey et al., (2019) concluded that consensus has the least predictive value than the combined influence of the other two features of the HRM system in developing affective commitment in the Malaysian context. Thus, in this research case, the study supports and emphasises that consensus does not influence employee affective commitment and OCB in the Pakistani context.

Continuing the discussion of the results, the study found that employee perception of internal consistency regarding HPWS is an important feature of the HRM system and

plays a significant role in predicting employee affective commitment. This result aligns with previous research by Sanders et al. (2008) and Cafferkey et al. (2019), who found a direct effect of consistency on affective commitment in the Netherlands and Malaysian contexts.

On the other hand, surprisingly in this research, consistency did not predict OCB in employees. The findings contradict the theoretical assumptions made by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) that validity and internal consistency among HR practices are essential in order to avoid the ambiguous signalling effect of the HR content. However, the research indicates that the signalling effectiveness of HPWS to be internal-consistent did not motivate employees to be voluntarily supportive and to indulge in extra-helping behaviours in this context.

Although, previous empirical studies have reported a direct and positive relationship of consistency on OCB and have found it to mediate the relationship between the 'reputation of HRM system' (distinctiveness and consensus combined) and OCB (De la Rosso.,2020). However, this was not the case in this research. As argued by Organ, (1988) OCB are voluntary behaviours of employees, which are not mentioned in a formal job description. Therefore, it is not necessary for such behaviours to be present in formal workplace attitudes. Thus, employees' perceptions of HR content being internally consistent could contribute to affective commitment (Cafferkey et al., 2019), employee's intention to remain (De la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020), and overall HRM target achievement (Hauff et al., 2017). However, this may not directly encourage employees to engage in OCB. OCBs are usually the result of perceptions of fairness and trustworthiness of the employer (Frandalet al., 2009; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). This notion is further discussed in the next section, which strengthens the theoretical approaches used to create the serial mediation model in this research.

Finally, turning to the results concerning distinctiveness as a feature of the HRM system. Previous empirical studies consistently highlight distinctiveness as the most influential factor in shaping employee outcomes (Hewett et al., 2018). In line with these findings, the current research's data analysis also revealed that distinctiveness had the highest predictive value for both affective commitment and OCB (see Figure 5-2). These results align with previous studies examining the impact of HRM system strength on employee behaviours.

For instance, Sanders et al. (2008) conducted empirical research in Dutch hospitals and discovered that distinctiveness significantly contributes to affective commitment among employees, surpassing the influences of consistency and consensus. Similarly, Li et al. (2011) conducted a study in Chinese hotels and found that distinctiveness emerged as the strongest predictor among the three HRM system features in shaping employee attitudes.

Regarding OCB, the present study found that distinctiveness stands out as the sole HRM system feature predicting OCB among employees. When employees perceive HPWS as distinctive in terms of its visibility, legitimacy, and relevance, they are more inclined to engage in extra-helpful behaviours. de la Russo et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of relevance, as employees tend to reciprocate with citizenship behaviours when they perceive the work environment as relevant to their needs. In the context of this research, the findings not only establish a direct effect of distinctiveness on OCB but also provide further support for the previously posited notion that distinctiveness serves as the most robust predictor of employee attitudes (Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011; Hewett et al., 2018).

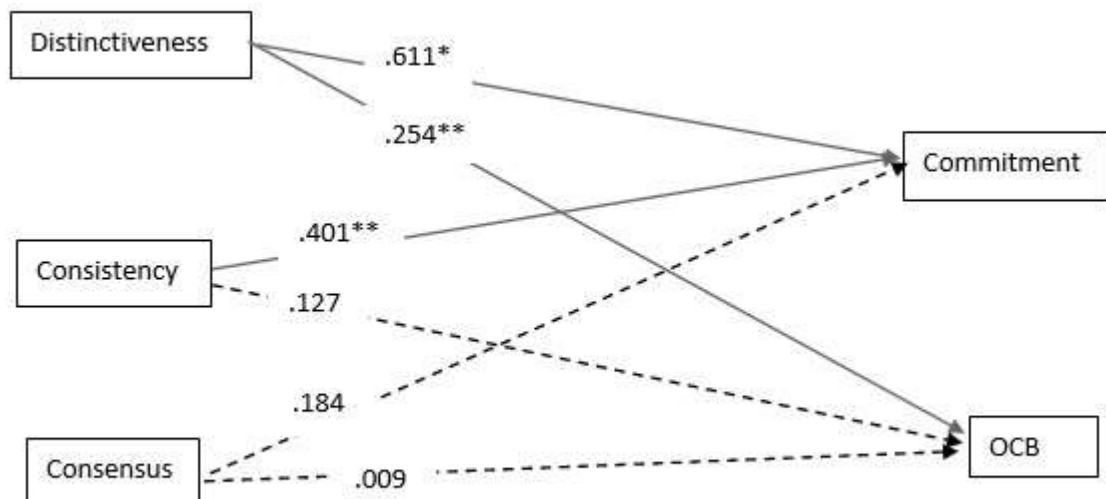


Figure 5-2; Model of Impact of three features of HRM system on employee commitment and OCB. Note: dotted line indicates nonsignificant relationships

In sum, the result of the study indicates that regardless of the national culture, the industrial sector (manufacturing or service), and adverse conditions caused by uncertainties like COVID-19, the strength of the HRM system has a positive influence on employee affective commitment and OCB. Thereby Hypothesis 1(a) and 1(b) are supported. Specifically, the distinctiveness of the HRM system, characterised by its visibility, relevance, and legitimacy, emerges as the most influential feature, shaping both affective commitment and OCB among employees in this particular context. Conversely, consensus does not predict employee attitudes, and consistency does not influence OCB. Thus, these findings suggest that while each individual feature of the HRM system may not independently reinforce positive employee behaviours, their collective influence is significant. This somehow confirms what is proposed in HRM system theory (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff and Bowen, 2016) that a robust system necessitates the simultaneous presence of all three dimensions, fostering positive behaviours.

Furthermore, these research findings are consistent with prior studies that have demonstrated the direct influence of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (combined) as HRM system strength, on employee behaviours (Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011; Cafferkey et al., 2019; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). Thus, this research is one of those limited empirical studies that have highlighted the significance of features of the HRM system and have shown that they have value in themselves regardless of the specific HR practices, indicating the importance of the HR process-oriented approach.

5.4 Research question 2: Does HR climate, justice, and trust serially mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system, affective commitment, and OCB?

According to the results of the first objective of the study, the features of the HRM system collectively have a significant and positive effect on employee attitudes. Individually, internal consistency fails to predict OCB and consensus fails to influence both outcome variables, affective commitment, and OCB. This led the study to further explore the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcome by putting three mediators that sequentially explain the relationship between the two points.

Before discussing the sequential mediation of these three variables, the research examined the relationship among those mediators. This was represented in hypotheses H2, H3, H4,

and H5 of the study while sequential mediation is represented in hypothesis H6 of the study. Hypotheses two, three, and four noted that *H2: strength of the HRM system has a positive effect on HR climate H3: HR Climate has a positive effect on organisational justice, H4: organisational justice has a positive effect on organisational trust, and H5: organisational trust has a positive effect on H5(a) affective commitment and H5(b) OCB.* The sixth hypothesis proposed that *H6: HR climate, justice, and trust sequentially mediate between the strength of the HRM system and H6(a) affective commitment and H6(b) OCB.*

5.4.1 Relationship between the strength of the HRM system and HR Climate

Concerning the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and HR Climate, hypothesis H2 was supported. The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between the strength of the HRM system and the HR climate. This suggests that individual perceptions of the HRM system can drive and influence the strong situation in an organisation. When considering the unstandardized coefficient value of the relationship between the strength of the HRM system on the HR climate reported in the previous chapter (see Table 13), the study found a significant and direct relationship with HR climate. The strength of the HRM system helps create a strong situation in which unambiguous messages are communicated to employees. In this instance, employees who observed HR content to be distinctive, consistent, and consensual reported higher and more positive experiences of HR content (strong Climate). The finding is in line with the previous empirical research conducted by Katou, (2013) who found the same results.

The data indicates that there is a positive relationship between the strength of the HRM system and the HR climate. These findings reinforce that the features of the HRM system can foster a strong situation in which employees experience and attribute meaning to HR content (Kinnie et al., 2005; Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). This highlights the importance of the social context and accurate attributions for the emergence of a strong climate, rather than relying solely on idiosyncratic perceptions. These empirical results align with the attribution theory adopted by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) to explain the establishment of a strong climate.

5.4.2 Relationship between HR Climate and Organisational Justice

Regarding the relationship between HR climate and organisational justice, Hypothesis H3 was supported. As noted in the literature review clear understanding of the purposes of

HR content implemented | in an organisation can foster fairness perceptions among employees (Katou, 2013). A sense of fairness in terms of the distribution of rewards, procedures, and communication lies at the core of a strong climate. The findings of the study provide empirical support and demonstrate this claim. Studies that have examined the relationship between climate and justice have found that organisations that have a strong climate (satisfaction and understanding regarding HR content), are more likely to develop a fairness perception in employees (Zhange and Agarwal, 2009; Frenkel et al., 2012a; Katou, 2013). The result of this study found that climate has a significant and positive relationship with organisational justice and strengthened the claim of these empirical studies mentioned above.

This research represents the first investigation of this relationship in the manufacturing sector of Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. The finding exerts our understanding that satisfaction with employer communicating their intent and purposes of HR content that is shared among employees is likely to report a higher level of justice perceptions. Therefore, the study suggests that a shared situation and environment play a crucial role in employees' evaluation of fairness within an organisation.

Organisational justice is sensitive to context (Yadav and Gupta, 2017; Jahanzeb and Mohanty, 2019) and it might be difficult to develop fairness perceptions in Pakistani organisations due to its management style and culture. Considering the management in most Pakistani organisations, which are considered directive, controlling, bureaucratic, and based on favouritism, corruption, and nepotism (Khilji and Wang, 2006; Ali and Brandl, 2017; Riaz et al., 2021). Additionally, considering the Pakistani national culture, which is characterized by a high-power distance society and cultural tightness. It is highly unlikely that employees would evaluate and perceive their organisation to be fair. However, recently the transition has been taking place in the value system of Pakistani organisations and some employers are successfully implementing modern, employee-centric, and strategic HRM practices (i.e., HPWS, HCHRM) (Ali and Brandle, 2017; Riaz et al., 2021). This might help encourage employee participation and involvement in the decision-making process, and subsequently exhibit the fairness characteristic of the organisation. As Greenberg, (1990) suggested, employee involvement can help enhance the perceptions of fairness. For instance, when employees are involved in setting up their

targets or in any other procedures that are being held in the company, they will most likely perceive their organisation as just and fair.

However, the finding of the study suggests that this might not be enough to establish justice and fairness perceptions in tight cultures with high power distance societies. The findings of the study reinforce the argument made by Frenkel et al., (2012a), that the entire focus on HR policy and strategy (HPWS) is not enough to establish effective organisations and fairness perceptions, whereas management needs to give attention to the psychological aspect, such as employment relations, perceptions, and strong climate. The result of the study supports this notion and, despite climate being designed for western employment societies, the results proved that it can similarly encourage fairness perceptions among employees in tight societies. Therefore, management in Pakistani organisations should focus on establishing a strong climate besides implementing HPWS in their organisation to boost justice perceptions, which is often very difficult to establish in high power distance cultures.

5.4.3 Relationship of Organisational justice and Organisational trust

Moving on to the findings related to the relationship between organisational justice and trust, it was hypothesised H4 that justice has a positive effect on organisational trust. As indicated in the literature review chapter that justice perceptions among employees have been shown to increase the level of trust in the organisation. Employees trust their organisation primarily because they expect their employer to be fair in recognising their contributions and providing fair rewards as an obligation to their employees (Tremblay et al., 2010; Colquitt and Rodale, 2011; Colquitt et al., 2013).

As predicted, the findings of the study support this assumption and the result indicates that justice positively and significantly predicts organisational trust. In other words, accuracy in terms of the distribution of rewards, consistency in procedures, and proper communication can allow mutual care and concern to develop, encouraging trust in the organisation. The findings of the study reinforce the argument made by Colquitt et al., (2012), that justice is relevant to trust, as it can foster a sense of mutual emotional environment while also signalling that authorities are dependable and reliable. The result of the study is in line with the previous majority of the empirical studies (Cohen-Charash

and Spector, 2001; Aryee, et al., 2002; Stinglhamber, et al., 2006; Frandle et al., 2009; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Colquitt, et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2017).

In a country such as Pakistan, which has faced economic and financial crises during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a higher chance that employees' uncertainty has increased during this time. The results of the study suggest that employees' level of trust is very sensitive to organisational justice so dependability and reliability inherited from justice perceptions will give them a sense of confidence when thinking about future circumstances. The dependability in uncertainty will encourage emotional bonds and trust. Contrary to researchers who argue that justice and trust produce mixed results (Wong et al., 2006), the findings of this research suggest that manufacturing sector employees need to perceive their organisation as fair and just in order to establish emotional bonds and trust, especially in severe circumstances such as a pandemic. In addition, the findings somehow strengthen the theory, concept, and ideas behind choosing justice as the second mediator and trust as the third mediator in the research framework, as climate directly influences organisational justice, and fairness directly influences organisational trust.

5.4.4 Relationship of organisational trust with affective commitment and OCB.

Moving forward, let us delve into the results concerning the relationship between organisational trust, commitment, and OCB. Hypothesis H5 posited that trust has a positive impact on affective commitment (H5a) and OCB (H5b). As explicated in the literature review chapter, affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment an individual develops towards an organisation, as manifested by an individual's identification with and involvement in that organisation (Mercurio, 2015). On the other hand, OCB encompasses employee behaviours that extend beyond the formal job description (Organ, 1988). The findings of the study reveal a significant and positive association between trust in the organisation and affective commitment and OCB, thus providing support for H5(a) and H5(b). In essence, these results indicate that when employees trust their organisation, they form an emotional bond with it, reducing the likelihood of turnover and fostering a willingness to go above and beyond their assigned duties. Consequently, trust in the organisation emerges as a critical factor in understanding employee affective commitment and OCB. These findings align with previous research suggesting that trust positively influences affective commitment (Fischer et al., 2020) and OCB (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002).

The findings of the study suggest that during high-stress circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, employees' behaviours are more likely to be influenced by their level of trust in the organization. One possible reason for this could be the inherent nature of the construct involved. Trust, being an emotionally driven construct, carries feelings of hope, reliance, optimism, and confidence in the organization. Therefore, the study suggests that in environments characterized by high levels of anxiety and stress, trust in the organization plays a crucial role in facilitating commitment and OCB. In conclusion, the study suggests that Pakistani employees show a stronger emotional connection to their organization and exhibit higher levels of commitment when they trust their employers.

Furthermore, when considering the influence of perceptions of consistency and consensus regarding HR content on OCB (see previously discussed section 5.3), it is evident that trust has a significantly greater impact on OCB compared to the influence of a few HRM system strength dimensions. This suggests that employees are more inclined to go above and beyond their expected job roles when they have a stronger emotional and rational-based trust in their organization, whereas the impact of internal alignment of HPWS and agreement among HR policymakers does not foster OCB. These findings align with the existing understanding that OCBs are primarily influenced by perceptions of fairness and trustworthiness from the employer (Frandle et al., 2009; Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Fischer et al., 2020). This suggests that trust is an essential construct, surpassing the influence of consistency and consensus, in fostering commitment and OCB, particularly during times of high uncertainty and severity, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial for organizational trust to coexist with HRM system strength. This substantiates the rationale for selecting organizational trust as the third mediator in the research framework, bolstering the overall concept and ideas.

5.4.5 Serial mediation of HR climate, organisational justice, and trust in organisation.

Moving forward, let us examine the results pertaining to the relationship of serial mediation involving HR climate, justice, and trust, between the strength of the HRM system, affective commitment, and OCB, as postulated in the sixth hypothesis of this study. Hypothesis H6 posited that HR climate, justice, and trust would sequentially mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and affective commitment (H6a) as well as OCB (H6b). The study aims to uncover potential

mechanisms that elucidate the relationship between HR process and employee behaviours, thus shedding light on this intricate linkage (Nishi et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011)

The data indicate that HR climate, organisational justice, and trust partially mediate between the strength of HRM the system and affective commitment. On the other hand, these three mediators fully mediate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and OCB. Thus, the study concluded that H6(a) is partially supported and H6(b) is fully supported.

Besides discussing the serial mediation of three variables, HR climate, justice, and trust between HRM system strength and two employee behaviours, the study has discussed the role of each single mediator in between. In this way, the thesis is able to compare and demonstrate that the research's proposed serial meditation model outperformed the single mediation model and strengthen the concepts, ideas, and theories behind developing the sequential model.

5.4.5.1 Serial mediation between HRM system strength and affective commitment.

Based on the results presented in Table 4-5 in the previous chapter, it is evident that HR climate and justice do not sequentially mediate the relationship between HRM system strength and affective commitment. In other words, when a second mediator (organisational justice) was added to the research model in sequence after the first mediator (HR climate), no sequential mediation occurred. The study revealed that HRM system strength does not contribute to affective commitment, through the improvement of a strong situation and perceptions of fairness. Although a strong and direct link was found between HRM system strength on HR climate, HR climate on justice, and justice on affective commitment, but no sequential mediation was found. In addition, the study found that organisational justice alone as a single mediator did not either mediate between HRM system strength and affective commitment (see Table 4-5).

As discussed in the literature review chapter, fairness and justice perceptions are viewed within the framework of social exchange norms between employers and employees (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013). According to this perspective, employees reciprocate with positive behaviours, such as commitment, in response to fairness in the organization. However, the results demonstrate that justice does not influence affective

commitment, nor does it sequentially mediate after HR climate in the relationship between HRM system strength and affective commitment. A possible explanation for these findings could be the influence of contextual and cultural factors, as severe uncertainty conditions (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and cultural norms can interact with the effects of fairness. Organizational justice has been observed to have varying effects in different contexts, particularly in countries with high power distance, such as Pakistan (Islam et al., 2012; Batool, 2013; Jehnazib and Mohanty, 2020). Additionally, Farndale and Sanders (2017) argue that the concept of social exchange applies less to employees in high-power distance cultures, as they tend to display submissive behaviour towards authority figures and may be less sensitive to norms of reciprocity. This implies that they rely less on organizational justice. When considering these findings in a broader context, this further strengthens the assumptions made in the research framework that HR climate and justice alone are insufficient to facilitate commitment, necessitating the inclusion of an additional third mediator to sequentially mediate this relationship.

Moving on with the discussion, when the third mediator trust was added to the research model (strength of HRM system-HR climate-justice-commitment), the study found that three mediators serially and partially mediate between the strength of the HRM system and affective commitment. The result strengthens the theoretical arguments proposed in the study's conceptual framework, suggesting that the strength of the HRM system can contribute to a strong climate, which, in turn, fosters perceptions of fairness, ultimately influences trust in the organisation, resulting in a high level of employee affective commitment.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the sequential mediation of HR climate and justice between HRM system strength and affective commitment was not significant until trust was included as the third mediator in the model. This implies that during the COVID-19 crisis and in high power distance cultures, employees adhere to the reciprocal social exchange norms through trust. These findings support the concept of the social exchange process, which is often documented in literature as originating from justice and influencing employee outcomes through trust (Colquitt et al., 2013). The study's results enhance the credibility of the widely accepted belief that trust plays a significant and essential role in establishing affective commitment (Tan and Tan, 2000; Aryee et al., 2002; Trembley et al., 2010; Colquitt et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2017).

The result of serial mediation suggests that regardless of the national culture and challenging circumstances (due to the pandemic), trust proves to be a promising construct in the study's serial mediation model and has facilitated affective commitment in employees. The study is somewhat in line with previous empirical studies conducted in the Asian context. Such as Aryee et al., (2002) found that employees in India exhibit affective commitment in response to fairness, largely driven by trust in the organisation. One may anticipate that the trust system is more valued in western cultures than in eastern cultures, where employees tend to have a higher level of justice perceptions and good relationships with their managers than compared to the eastern cultures where there is higher power distance. However, the study's results demonstrate that trust is valued by employees in a tight culture and can encourage affective commitment in a social exchange process when trust originates from justice perceptions.

5.4.5.2 Serial mediation between HRM system strength and OCB

Concerning the discussion of the results related to serial mediation between HRM system strength and OCB, as represented by hypothesis H6(b). It was hypothesised that HR climate, justice, and trust serially mediate between the strength of the HRM system and OCB.

Interestingly, when the HR climate was tested as the single and first mediator between the strength of the HRM system and OCB, no mediation was found. The result contradicts the process-oriented approach by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), which claimed that HR climate will facilitate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee behaviours and performance.

According to the literature, a strong climate is characterised by coherent messages shared among all employees, along with their understanding of expectations regarding rules, policies, and appropriate behaviours (Ostroff and Bowen, 2016). The theoretical argument made by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) stated that a strong situation will act as a mediator and will facilitate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and the outcome. However, in this research context, the study found that climate has no mediating effect between the strength of the HRM system and OCB in Pakistani employees.

The reason behind this could be attributed to the concept of climate, which appears to align better with cultures characterised by low power distance, unlike Pakistan. In such cultures,

there is open communication between employers and employees, and employees feel more at ease expressing their opinions, thereby enhancing the consistency, clarity, and understandability of HR content or high-performance work systems (HPWS). Hence, according to Farndale and Sanders, (2017), low power distance cultures have a greater potential for the climate to exert a more significant influence on employee behaviour. In contrast, in a high-power distance society like Pakistan, the influence of a strong climate may be limited in reinforcing employee behaviours, particularly those that are not explicitly defined in the employee job description, such as OCB.

With justice being the second mediator after the HR climate between the strength of the HRM system and OCB, the result indicates that no mediation has taken place. This suggests that neither HR climate nor justice can facilitate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and OCB, although justice is considered to be an ascendant of OCB (Organ, 1988; Moorman, 1991). The study's findings corroborate the prevailing belief that justice and social exchange norms are less effective in eastern cultures, specifically concerning organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Consequently, justice may not be as efficient in fostering OCBs within these societies. The findings are in line with studies conducted in Asian cultures (high power distance societies) that have found justice to have an insignificant relationship with OCB (Batool, 2013; Yardan et al., 2014; Jehanzaib and Mohantay, 2020). These findings strengthen the study's assumption for the research framework that climate and justice are not enough to facilitate OCB, there is a need for an additional and third mediator in this relationship.

Continuing the discussion, when the study incorporated the third mediator 'trust' into the framework (strength on HRM system- climate-justice-OCB), the findings indicate that climate, justice, and trust serially mediate the relationship between HRM system strength and OCB. The study supports the notion that employee behaviours are not solely determined by the strength of the HRM system, which contributes to the development of a robust climate (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Additionally, the study reveals that a strong situation influences both organizational justice and trust, subsequently fostering OCB. The finding of the study is in line with another empirical research conducted by Katou, (2013), which is one of the few studies performed on this subject. The current study supports the argument made by Katou, (2013) that employee reaction does not just depend on the HRM

system, but individual perceptions influence justice and trust which then impact employee behaviours.

This suggests that climate and justice alone are not enough to establish OCB among employees, but trust is needed to mediate and facilitate the relationship between HRM system strength and OCB. In addition, the study supports the notion that trust acts as a mediator in a social exchange process in which employees perceive fairness or justice and reply with OCB. Similar results were seen in the affective commitment case, as the relationship only became significant once trust was added as the third mediator in the research model. The serial mediation of climate, justice, and trust with both employee outcomes, strongly supports the research framework and theoretical assumptions created by the researcher to unbox the black box between the HR process and employee behaviours relationship.

Besides that, the statistical analysis of serial mediation using Hayes PROCESS revealed that there is a presence of a non-significant direct link between the strength of the HRM system and OCB. This enriches the significance of the link between HRM system strength on climate, climate on justice, justice on trust, and trust on OCB. Climate, justice, and trust therefore fully mediate the influence between HRM system strength and OCB.

The serial mediation of three variables is one of the major contributions this study makes to the HRM literature. These variables have often been treated separately in various studies, where justice alone plays a mediator or moderator (Zhang and Agarwal, 2009), trust is being treated inter-mediating mechanism (Puusa and Tolvanen, 2006) and so is the climate (Li, et al., 2011). But examining three of these variables in a single setting during COVID-19, this study is trying to open the black box between the HR process-oriented approach and employee behaviours.

5.4.6 Significance of organisational trust in the research framework

One noteworthy finding from the study is the significant role of organizational trust in the serial mediation of climate, justice, and trust between the independent and dependent variables. The results indicate that the inclusion of trust in the research model has a meaningful impact on both employee commitment and OCB, particularly among Pakistani employees in the manufacturing sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than relying solely on shared perceptions of HR content and fairness in the organization, these

employees place greater emphasis on organizational trust as a means to foster affective commitment and OCB in response to the strength of the HRM system. Given the economic and financial challenges posed by the pandemic, employees in Pakistan may have developed a heightened sensitivity towards trust that originates from fairness, while fairness originates from a strong HR climate. Therefore, the findings suggest that managers should prioritize efforts to enhance perceptions of trust and trustworthiness within the organisation, particularly during times of high uncertainty. By establishing a trust-rich environment, organizations can effectively improve both affective commitment and OCB amidst crisis situations such as the ongoing pandemic.

6 Chapter Six: | Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This is the last chapter of this thesis, which concludes the research and provides a discussion of the study's contribution. The chapter begins with a summary of the research which includes the purpose of the research, research procedures, and findings. Followed by a discussion of the study's theoretical contribution and practical implications. Lastly, the chapter discusses the study's limitations and recommendations for future studies.

6.2 Research Summary

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the business environment has become more challenging resulting in, organisations striving to recover from the loss faced due to lockdowns, government regulations, and imposed restrictions. As noted before the manufacturing sector of Pakistan has experienced a decline in their growth since March 2020 (Economic survey of Pakistan,2022). During the pandemic, this sector was severely affected, due to the closure of production sites and disturbance in supply-chain, which led to a rise in the number of redundancies. This manufacturing sector in Pakistan witnessed a high number of redundancies, job losses, and pay reductions during the pandemic (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics(a), 2021). Consequently, employee productivity, commitment, and citizenship behaviours have declined.

To restabilize and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, manufacturing organisations focus on improving their efficiency and performance through investments in human capital using HR practices or a bundle of HR practices (i.e., HPWS). Over the years, Human Resource Management has offered various theoretical approaches to cultivate an efficient workforce, retain talented employees, and enhance organizational performance in response to the challenging business environment. One such approach is HR process-oriented approach, suggested by Bowen and Ostroff, (2004), which is empirically examined and tested in this research.

The idea of the HR process-oriented approach gained popularity among HR scholars in early 2000. It is a psychological process that emerges in an organisation when employees develop sense-making, insight, and understanding of HR content. It is usually developed through the procedures of communication and application of HR content in an organisation (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). HR process theory has become interesting for

scholars as well as for organisations because it is a potential source of obtaining a competitive advantage, particularly to recover from the loss that occurred due to the COVID-19 crisis. While HR practices can be easily copied by competitors but HR process that surrounds it, such as the way it is communicated and applied, cannot be easily copied.

HR Process are attributions and perceptions surrounding HR content, such as its distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus (Sanders and Yang, 2016) referred to as the strength of the HRM system. The HRM system strength assists employees to develop sensemaking about HR content, resulting in an HR climate emerging in an organisation that facilitates the influence of HRM system strength on employee attitude and performance.

The primary goal of this research is to test a conceptual framework that examines the effect of HR system strength based on the mechanism of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus on employee outcomes (e.g., affective commitment and Organisational citizenship behaviours OCB). In addition, the study's purpose is to test the role of HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust as a sequential and causal mediating link between HR system strength and employee affective commitment and OCB. The context of this research is a large-scale manufacturing organisation located in Pakistan.

Regarding the first objective, the research has found that HRM system strength has combined predictive value on both employee outcomes. The study provides empirical evidence for the assumptions made for the HRM system theory by Bowen and Ostroff., (2004). Indeed, HR system strength supports and encourages positive employee behaviours, in particular affective commitment and OCB. However, the study found that individually few features of the HRM system were not able to predict employee outcomes, such as consensus does not influence affective commitment, while consistency and consensus both failed to encourage OCB among employees. On the other hand, distinctiveness was the only feature of the HRM system that individually predicted both employee affective commitment and OCB. This connects to the previous popular findings that distinctiveness is the strongest feature of the HRM system that can positively reinforce employee outcomes (Sanders et al., 2008; Lie et al., 2011; Hewett et al., 2018).

Moving on to the findings regarding objective two, serial mediation, argued that HR climate, organisational justice, and trust in sequence can facilitate the relationship between the strength of the HRM system and employee outcomes. This assumption was partially confirmed in the case of affective commitment and fully confirmed in the case of OCB.

Overall, the study suggests that HRM system strength can contribute to employee commitment and OCB while establishing HR climate, fairness, and trust among employees in an organisation. The empirical result of this study provides a new understanding of the relationship of mediating variables between the two points.

6.3 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of the study have both academic contributions and practical implications. The research contributes to the literature of Human Resource Management (HRM) and provides information that has addressed several academic gaps. Firstly, by expanding and exploring the HR process-oriented approach instead of the HR content approach in understanding the relationship with employee outcomes, this research has addressed the academic gap. The study has followed the recommendation put forth by Nishi et al., (2008) and Bowen and Ostroff, (2004) that future studies should examine the HR process approach, particularly how employees perceive and view HR content in order to achieve a specific purpose (e.g., improve organisational performance). The study provides valuable information about the HR process or HRM system strength theory. To foster affective commitment and OCB within an organisation, management should focus on communicating the intended purposes of HR content, so employees perceive them to be distinctive, consistent, and consensual. However, if management would give attention to a single feature of the HRM system, they might find that somehow not every feature of the HRM system automatically encourages commitment and OCB.

Second, the research has developed a theoretical model that explores the relationship between HR system strength, HR climate, organisational justice, and organisational trust in relation to affective commitment and OCB. In doing so, this study contributes to the expanding body of research and addresses a gap in the black-box debate by identifying the underlying linking mechanisms that connect different elements of the relationship. The study provides empirical evidence regarding the role of HR climate, justice, and trust as serial mediation mechanisms within the relationship. This is attributed to the limited

empirical research in this area, which has resulted in an unclear understanding of the mechanism through which HRM system strength influences employee behaviour. The study suggests that employees' perceptions, influenced by the strength of the HRM system, shape shared perceptions and create conducive work environments that promote fairness and trust, ultimately fostering employee commitment and OCB. This aligns with Wright and Snell's (1999) statement that, an organization cannot be simply constituted by adding individuals; rather, effectiveness depends on the synergy within systems and relationships.

Thirdly, the study contributes to the HRM literature by providing valuable insights and understanding into the interconnectedness of social exchange theory, associated within the relationship of organizational justice, trust, and employee attitudes. The study revealed that trust is a significant and indispensable factor in high-power distance societies, enabling employees to adhere to social exchange norms. In other words, the study established that trust plays a facilitating role in promoting commitment and OCB, particularly when it is rooted in justice. This finding aligns with the argument put forth by Cropanzano and Mitchell, (2005) that trust serves as a promising mechanism for elucidating the social exchange benefits of justice and its influence on employee behaviours.

Fourth, the study extends the knowledge referring to HRM system strength and employee behaviour using climate, justice, and trust in non-USA or European contexts, reconfirming that context matters. The study confirms that cultural settings, including the impact of circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can influence how employees perceive HRM system strength and fairness. The research indicates that certain aspects of the HRM system and overall justice perceptions are very sensitive to culture and context. Interestingly, a strong climate and fairness perceptions did not independently or sequentially facilitate the relationship between employee perceptions and behaviours. Whereas, the study highlights the importance of trust perceptions, as a combination of trust along with climate and justice was found to be necessary for fostering affective commitment and OCB in Pakistani culture.

6.4 Practical implications

While empirically testing the theoretical model of this research in the Pakistani context, the study found that some organisations in Pakistan, particularly the one participating in

this research have transformed from a bureaucratic HRM structure to a modern HRM structure (also see Riaz et al., 2021). In addition, the use of strategic HRM practices (i.e., HPWS, HCHRM) is growing and is successfully being implemented. Therefore, the study suggests that HR practitioners should establish a high-performance work system to be more distinctive and attractive to employees. In addition, it should be communicated to employees often so they can understand its value and purpose.

However, conceptualising HPWS as a signalling system that facilitates the development of collective perceptions influencing justice and trust poses challenges. This is more difficult considering that Pakistan organisations' cultures have high uncertainty avoidance and high power distance (Khilji and Wang, 2006; Ali and Brandl, 2017; Riaz et al., 2021) and are experiencing the COVID-19 crisis. Employees in such cultures assume that it is socially unacceptable for them to express their views, ideas, feelings, and perspectives thus, diminishing the signal effect of HPWS on employees. Therefore, managers need to develop skills and knowledge to design and implement the strength of the HRM system (Bowen and Ostroff, 2008) surrounding HPWS so it can lead to desired employee attitudes. A certain skill that managers can develop in Pakistani organisations is open communication. Open communication is quite rare to be found in high power distance cultures but can be very effective, especially during economic and financial crises faced by the country due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Open communication can reduce the possibility of negative employee outcomes linked with HPWS experienced differently by individual employees (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Katou et al., 2014) thus, effectively influencing employee behaviours.

Furthermore, in today's global economy, which has recently been affected by the COVID-19 crisis, the key to gaining a competitive advantage lies in enhancing both human capital (i.e., employees' skills and capabilities) and social capital (i.e., the network of relationships within the organisation). However, this might not be enough but, some attention also needs to be given to psychological capital (i.e., who you are). Specifically in a country like Pakistan that is facing severe economic crises, where manufacturing employees are discouraged and emotionally stressed. So, organisations should prioritise developing psychological capital, including fostering hope, reliance, resilience, optimism, and confidence. The focus on psychological capital can lead to improving individual and organisational performance (also see Katou et al., 2014).

HR management should recognise the significance of cultivating a positive perception of the HR structure and function, which becomes particularly crucial in the post-COVID period. A strong HRM system contributes to the internal branding of the organization and posits HR content and structure in a positive light. Hence HR department should invest in communicating their practices to employees, explaining their relevance, how internally aligned practices are, how they add value, and developing agreement with line managers, a few examples of distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. However, an important consideration is that effective communication requires consistency and regular clarification, which can incur costs and consume time. But the potential benefits of employee affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), performance, motivation, and satisfaction resulting from a strong HRM system outweigh the costs associated with its development. Therefore, the HR department should implement such a process.

6.5 Limitation

This research has found three limitations. First, the data was collected at one point in time, using self-reporting measures, during Covid- 19 pandemic, when high levels of stress and uncertainty were present. Due to data being collected at one point in time so results do not allow dynamic causal interference and future studies can be beneficial by using longitudinal data.

Second, the current study generated its findings from a single organisation belonging to a single industrial type, and in one country, this can limit the generalisability of the results. Future research can be conducted in multiple contexts and be compared, to understand the process approach and employee attitude relationship in cross-cultural contexts (i.e., Asian, and European contexts).

Thirdly, the study's model is relatively simple as it solely focuses on serial mediation. To develop insight and understanding of HRM system strength effect and impact, it would be beneficial to develop and test the mediation and moderation model. With the outstanding work carried out by Cafferkey et al. (2019) and Heffernan et al. (2022), who have examined mediation and moderation models between HRM system strength and employee outcomes, their research can serve as a valuable starting point for the development of further conceptual models.

Despite its limitations, the study offers empirical evidence supporting various theoretical assumptions and approaches in HRM literature, such as the HR process-oriented approach and social exchange theory. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study is among the pioneering research conducted in the Pakistani manufacturing context during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it contributes to the limited body of literature that examines Bowen and Ostroff's HRM system theory in an Asian context. Although the data were collected at a single point in time, they were gathered from multiple respondents and agents, including senior managers, managers, and non-managerial employees, ensuring the appropriate reporting and linkage of variables. Therefore, the study confirms the serial linkage between HR climate, justice, and trust within the relationship of HRM system strength, and employee outcome. It provides empirical evidence supporting the theoretical assumptions associated with each research variable that leads to the development of the research framework.

6.6 Recommendation for future research

The study has focused on a very crucial topic of employee perceptions and the HR process-oriented approach. The research findings suggest that promoting the visibility, relevance, mutual agreement, and internal alignment of a high-performance work system can enhance affective commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour. This improvement is achieved through enhancing HR climate, organisational justice, and trust. Furthermore, the study highlights the prominent role of trust in fostering this relationship, particularly in the Pakistani context. However, a single study cannot comprehensively test and validate every aspect of the HRM system, thus necessitating further research.

Firstly, future studies should adopt and embrace the meso approach to examine shared climate within the research model. The meso approach is where different levels of analysis are involved in research and the independent and dependent variables are bridged by the process of levels that are either 'top to down' or 'down to up' (Russo, et al., 2018). While some researchers view shared climate as a higher-level construct (Ostroff and Bowen, 2014; Russo, et al., 2018) distinct from an individual-level construct (Cafferkey et al., 2019; Katou, 2013), it would be interesting to test this research model through multi-level of analysis. Therefore, a suggestion for future research is to test the research framework using the meso approach, conceptualising the first mediator (Climate) at the macro level, and the second and third mediator (justice and trust) at the micro level.

Second, the study revealed a promising and prominent role of organisational trust in the research model, further emphasising the role of social exchange theory. It suggests that employees perceive trust as a crucial factor for adhering to norms of reciprocation in Pakistani culture. The study confirms that in the presence of trust, employees exhibit affective commitment and engage in organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) as a response to organisational justice and a strong HRM system. Further research is needed to test the role of trust in tight societies and high-power distance cultures. The current thesis did not examine the dimensions of trust but observed it as a single variable in the study's research model. Therefore, future studies could benefit by using dimensions of trust (affective-based trust and cognitive-based trust) to develop insight regarding which type of trust has a stronger mediating property, alongside HR climate and organisational justice.

Since there has been a rise in the number of studies to unbox the black box between HR practices and performance. The majority of the researchers would focus on the HR content and identify the linkage that led HRM practices to employee attitudes and organisational performance (Guest, 2007; Boxall and Mackey, 2009; Cafferkey and Dundon, 2017). However, attention has shifted to the process approach in recent times (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), with several studies exploring its impact on employee behaviours and organizational performance, assuming HR content as given (Sanders et al., 2008; Li et al., 2011; Sanders and Yang, 2016; Hauff et al., 2017; Cafferkey et al., 2019; de la Rosa-Navarro et al., 2020). Some researchers have integrated both HR content and HR process to examine their influence on employee reactions and organisational performance (Katou, 2013; Katou et al., 2014), but uncertainties remain. Therefore, future studies should investigate both HR content and HR process comprehensively, examining various employee outcomes to determine their respective influences. Additionally, the development of multiple models can help elucidate the linking mechanisms between the two points. Therefore, this research has provided a useful starting point for further studies to investigate the process approach on employee attitudes in the Pakistani context.

7 References

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SURVEY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Q1. Survey participant information form.

You are invited to take part in a research study because you are generally affected by HR practices and policies such as the High-Performance Work System (HPWS) implemented in your organisation. The period of COVID-19 has positively and/or negatively affected the

business environment, procedures, and the life of employees. Most of your organisation's employees are now working from home. It is important for you to take part in this research because this study will help your organisation identify areas that need to be built in order to improve employee commitment and citizenship behaviours during covid-19 crisis. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is essential for you to understand why this research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

This project is being undertaken as a part of Ph.D. research at Nottingham Trent University. It is important for you to know that **this is an independent research and is not attached to your organisation.** The study investigates the impact of the HRM system strength, (i.e. HR practices/HPWS to be perceived as distinctive, consistent, and consensual) on employee commitment and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB). In addition, the study is examining the role of mediation of HR climate, organisational justice, and trust between two points. This research aims to explore and understand the mechanism of how the HRM system strength can influence employee commitment and OCB through HR climate (i.e. employees' shared views about HR practices), Justice, and Trust during the coronavirus crisis (COVID-19).

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART

If you decide to take part in this survey, please read the consent form at the bottom of this page and click on the button "Yes, I agree". You will be asked several questions which

include a few | demographic questions such as your age, gender, and job role. Followed by questions that will evaluate HRM system strength, HR Climate, Justice, Trust, Commitment, and OCB. Your participation in this experiment is highly valued and is voluntary. It should take approximately **10-15 minutes** to complete the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data collected from this experiment will be confidential and anonymous. The software used to send online survey questions does not collect any identifying information therefore, your responses will remain anonymous.

It is your right to decide whether or not to take part. Even if you have decided to take part you can still withdraw your data from this research within **One** week after submission and without giving any reasons. In order for you to remove your data from this research, you will need to contact a Ph.D. research student within one week of your submission. The data cannot be erased after one week of your response submission and may still be used in the project analysis. An overview of findings, and/or reports will also be made freely available to the organisation (no identification of personal information) or posted on reputable (webbased) open-access repositories.

RESEARCH TEAM

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures, or requirements for participation, do not hesitate to contact myself (Ph.D. research student), or my research team (contact details below).

Research Team	Contact details	Institute address
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Survey Consent Form

To participate in this research, please select the option "Yes I agree" below. By doing that you agree to the following statements.

1. I agree to take part in this study.
2. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet of this research and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary.
4. I am free to withdraw my survey data from this research within **One** week after submission, and without giving any reason.
5. I understand that data collected during this research will only be used for this study.

- Yes, I agree.
- No, I do not agree.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1



Q2 What is your age?

20-30

30-40

40-50

>50



Q3 What is your gender?

Male

Female



Q4 what is your level of education?

- Under-Graduate
 - Masters
 - Mphil/ PHD
 - Other-Qualifications
-



Q6 Select a category that best describe your job role.

- Non-managerial employees
 - Middle management/ Line manager
 - Senior management/ Senior manager
-



Q7 How long have you | been working with your current organisation?

- less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 3-6 years
 - more than 6 years
-

Q8 Please write any code name below, (this name will be used to identify your survey data if in future you would like to withdraw yourself from this research within a given timeframe).

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2



Q9 The following statements will ask your opinions on the distinctiveness, consistency and consensual perceptions regarding HPWS/HR practices (i.e., training, rewards, performance review, communication, involvement etc.) implemented by HR department in your organisation. To what extent do you agree with the following statement. Please select one option for each question.

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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The HR department undertakes exactly those actions that meet my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HR staff has enough authority to get their ideas accepted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The HR department in this organisation has high added value.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my organisation, HR management is synonymous (closely associated) with excellent work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my organization, the HR function is not considered as a full management function.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, the HR staff is meet with much appreciation in this organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organisation, employee experience implemented HR practices/HPWS as relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many of the HR practices introduced by the HR department are useless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Employees in this organisation often wonder about the usefulness of specific HR practices

The actual function of HPWS is mystery to a large part of employees

Employees are regularly informed about the initiatives taken by the HR department

The HR department works too much behind the scenes

In this organization it is clear what belongs to the tasks and what's outside the field of the HR department

In this organization, HR policy changes every other minute

The various HR practices send inconsistent signals.

The successive initiatives or HR practices introduced by the HR department often clash badly

In this organisation, there is clear consistency of HRM message between words and deeds of the HR department

The suggestions, procedures, and HR practices developed by the HR department, actually add value to the functioning of the organisation.

The HR practices in this organisation do not contribute to employees (your) motivation.

The HPWS /HR practices is developed in such a way that desired performance is reinforce

The HR instruments for employee's appraisal succeed in encouraging the desired behaviour in employees(you)?

The HR practices/HPWS implemented in this organisation sound good in theory, but do not function in practice

The appraisal procedure developed by the HR department, has in practice other effects than the intended effects

There is a wide gap between intended and actual effects of HR initiatives

One can have faith that, HR practices realize the intended purpose

The HR department does not succeed in actively changing employees(your) behaviours

HR management and line management are clearly on the same wavelength regarding HPWS/HR practices

All HR staff members in this organization mutually agree with the manner in which employees are managed

Top management and HR management clearly share the same vision regarding HPWS/HR practices

Management unanimously supports HR policy in this organisation

HR management in this organisation is established by mutual agreement between HR management and line management

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3



Q10 The following questions are regarding HR climate in your organisation. For each of the following questions to what extent do you feel satisfied towards HR practices/HPWS? Please select one option to each question.

	Extremely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Extremely satisfied
How satisfied do you feel with the level of training you receive in your current job?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, how satisfied do you feel with your current career opportunities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied are you with this method of your performance review/appraisal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How effective do you think this system (performance-related bonus) is in encouraging you to improve your performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How satisfied do you feel with your pay?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How satisfied do you feel with your pay compared with the pay of your colleague?

How satisfied do you feel with the rewards and recognition you receive for your performance?

how satisfied do you feel with the benefits you receive - other than pay?

How satisfied are you with the amount of influence you have over your job?

Overall, how satisfied are you with the influence you have in company decisions that affect your job or work

How satisfied do you feel with the amount of information you receive about how your organisation is performing

I am fully aware of how I contribute to the company achieving its business objectives

Everyone here is aware of the long-term plans and goals of the organisation

How satisfied do you feel that your company provides you with reasonable opportunities to express grievances and raise personal concerns

How well do you think your organisation does in helping employees achieve a balance between home life and work.

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4



Q11 The following questions refer to HPWS/HR practices procedures your manager used to make decisions about your outcomes (such as training, rewards, and performance appraisal/

review). To what extent do you agree with the following statements? please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you had influence over the (outcome) arrived by those procedures?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have those procedures been applied consistently?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have those procedures been free of bias?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have those procedures been based on accurate information?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?



Q12 In your organisation, you receive different outcomes (including pay, other rewards, promotion etc). To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Does your (outcome) reflect the effort you have put into your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is your (outcome) appropriate for the work you have completed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does your (outcome) reflect what you have contributed to the organization?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is your (outcome) justified, given your performance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q13 The following questions refer to treatment you receive from you managers during the HPWS/HR practices procedures (training, pay, performance review,) implemented. To what extend do you agree with the following statements? please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Has he/she treated you in a polite manner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she treated you with dignity?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she treated you with respect?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she refrained from improper remarks or comments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q14 The following questions refer to explanations and information offered by your manager, on his/her decisions on the HPWS/HR practices procedures (such as training, reward,

performance appraisal/review) implemented. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Has he/she been candid in his/her communications with you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she explained decision-making procedures thoroughly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were his/her explanations regarding the procedures reasonable?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she communicated details in a timely manner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has he/she seemed to tailor his/her communications to individuals' (your) specific needs?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5



Q15 Following questions are regarding the trust you have on your organisation. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I believe my organisation has high integrity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can expect my organisation to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation is not always honest and truthful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I believe my organisation's motives and intentions are good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't think my organisation treats me fairly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation is open and upfront with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm not sure I fully trust my organisation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Block 6



Q16 Following questions are regarding your affective commitment towards your organisation. To what extend do you agree with the following statements? Please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy talking about my organisation to people outside it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that I could easily become as attached to another organisation as i am to this one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel like 'part of my family' at this organisation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to my organisation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me.

I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.

End of Block: Block 6

Start of Block: Block 7



Q17 Following questions are regarding your citizenship behaviours (i.e extra-helping behaviours) in your organisation. To what extend do you agree with the following questions? Please select one option to each question.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I help others who have heavy workloads.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I help others who have been absent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willingly giving my time to help others who have work related problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I help new people even though it is not required.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consult with other individuals who might be affected by my actions or decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not abuse the rights of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take steps to prevent problems with other co-workers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I inform manager before taking any important action.

I consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters.

I tend to make "mountains out of molehills" (makes problems bigger than they are).

I constantly talk about wanting to quit my job.

I am always focused on what's wrong with my situation, rather than the positive side of it.

I am always punctual.

I never take long lunches or breaks.

I do not take extra breaks.

I obey company's rules, regulations, and procedures even when no one is watching.

I keep abreast of changes in the organization.

I attend functions that are not required, but that helps the company image.

I attend and participate in meetings regarding the organization.

I "Keep up" with the developments in the company.

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Block 8

Q22 Please feel free to write any final or additional comments in the box below. Thank you for your participation in this research.

End of Block: Block 9
