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The Influence of Strategic Human Resource Management on Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life in Higher Educational Institutions: A Thematic Review Analysis

Neha Arora

Abstract

The digital revolution in higher education institutions (HEIs) has significantly impacted organizational frameworks, job procedures, and teaching and learning dynamics. Human Resource Management (HRM) plays more vital in ensuring job satisfaction and improving the quality of work life (QWL) of employees in these organizations. The present study aims to explore the influence of Human Resource Management (HRM) on job satisfaction and the quality of work life (QWL) among employees of higher educational institutions in digital era. The study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing insights from a comprehensive review of existing literature. Key themes such as digital competency development, virtual performance appraisals, and online professional growth initiatives are explored alongside traditional HRM practices. The findings indicate that vital HRM approaches, including employee engagement & career development, remain essential, incorporating digital tools and flexible policies is critical for addressing the unique challenges of the digital age. This research provides valuable insights into how HRM tactics can be implemented to meet the standards set by digital era to foster a supportive and adaptive work environment in higher educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION:

In the twenty-first century, digital connective technologies have had a significant impact on many spheres of society, including the political, social, and economic. The rapid global advancements in digital communications and learning technologies are driving organisational adjustments and new initiatives. The 21st century has seen the rise of digital connective technologies, which are bringing about significant changes in every aspect of life and indicating that a new era has begun: the digital age. Education is one of the core areas of life that has been redesigned to accommodate the evolving nature of what it means to live in this new era. Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in knowledge production and dissemination, making them especially vulnerable to change pressures (Şahin & Alkan, 2016). As a result, HEIs are being forced to assess their current structures and make drastic changes to better meet the demands of the twenty-first century due to the global competition for knowledge economy, which is being driven by the dominant roles of digital connective tools (Rust & Kim, 2012) (Odabaşı, Fırat, & İzmirli, 2010).

Human Resource Management in Digital Era:

Higher education, in line with its vision and mission, is an establishment that generates top-notch human resources to compete in the digital age (Keskes et al., 2018). Digital technologies have a growing impact on human resource management (HRM), which is impacted in numerous of ways, as well as employee working life (Parry & Strohmeier, 2014). Human resource management is a strategically important asset that helps organizations get an edge on their competition (Schroeder, 2013). In regard to human resource management in the digital age, Palmer et al. (2017) assert that it is therefore more diversified and people-oriented, with the duty

of creating demanding, varied tasks to keep young workers more engaged. Technology enhances HR functions such as planning, recruitment, performance management, reward management, health and safety, employee relations, and work design. However, it also creates new demands for the HR function to align human capital with digital needs. HR management practices have been indicated to have a major impact on job satisfaction, which in turn influences employee retention, performance, and overall organizational effectiveness (Armstrong, 2014).

Human Resource Management and Job Satisfaction:

The word job satisfaction refers to people's attitudes and sentiments regarding their work. Positive attitudes towards the job reflect job satisfaction. Job discontent is indicated by negative and unfavorable views regarding the job (Armstrong, 2006). Job satisfaction is a combination of individual's perspectives and emotions regarding their current jobs. Extreme job contentment and extreme dissatisfaction are two extremes of people's job satisfaction. Individuals may also hold opinions regarding many facets of their jobs, including the type of jobs they perform, their coworkers, superiors or subordinates, and their compensation (George et al., 2008).

Human Resource Management and Quality of Work Life:

Quality of work life has been defined as the workplace tactics, operations, and environment that encourage and maintain employee happiness with the goal of enhancing working conditions for employees and organizational effectiveness for employers. QWL is an ideology and set of principles that maintains that people are the organization's most valuable resource because they are dependable, accountable, and capable of making significant contributions (Lal & Sekhri, 2019). As such, they should be treated with respect and dignity (Tabassum et al., 2011). Quality of Work life has a significant impact on employee motivation at work and is essential to organizational effectiveness. (Smith and Gupta, 2011). Human resource management processes are directly connected to QWL since they influence the workplace in different ways. HRM approaches that encourage improved work-life balance and comprehensive QWL include telecommuting choices, flexible work hours, and supportive leadership (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Influence of HRM on Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life among employees of Higher Education Institutes

The hiring and selecting procedure are one of the main HRM procedures that influences job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is found to be higher when candidates are chosen based on how well their values, abilities, and the culture of the company mesh (Sharma & Goyal, 2023). Employees who are happy in their positions are more likely to feel appreciated, which increases job satisfaction. Faculty and staff at higher education institutions are more likely to be content with their positions if they believe that HRM practices assist their professional growth (Baloch et al., 2023). Another HRM technique that affects job satisfaction is performance management.

Performance reviews that are open, equitable, and constructive provide workers a sense of accomplishment and development by assisting them in identifying their areas of strength and growth (Sinha & Chaudhary, 2024). In higher education, where performance is frequently driven by intrinsic motivation, a fair remuneration plan that recognizes employees' efforts is essential to preserving employee happiness (Gul et al., 2023). Employees' quality of work life can be greatly enhanced by HRM procedures that foster a positive and healthy work environment. One of the most significant HRM practices that has an impact on workers' quality of life is work-life balance efforts. Colleges and universities frequently struggle to manage workloads, particularly for faculty members who are

Neha Arora

expected to conduct research, teaching, as well as administrative tasks. HRM practices that support remote work, flexible scheduling, and fair leave guidelines can reduce stress and enhance work-life balance, which will improve workers' general quality of life (Raza et al., 2023). Employees' entire quality of life is greatly enhanced by positive interpersonal interactions, which can be fostered by HRM practices (Ali et al., 2023).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:
Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in higher educational institutions have long been recognized as critical to the overall success of academic organizations. With technological advancements reshaping the landscape of education and the workplace, HRM strategies are pivotal in creating an environment that not only supports the wellbeing of employees but also enhances institutional flexibility and innovation. Research highlights that digital platforms can improve communication, collaboration, and feedback loops among staff members, which is critical in fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment (Melnyk et al., 2023). Platforms like employee engagement apps, virtual town halls, and digital surveys offer a space for faculty and administrative staff to voice concerns, suggest improvements, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Digital tools also facilitate transparent communication, which helps in bridging gaps between senior administration and staff, fostering trust, and improving organizational commitment. Professional development is a crucial element in fostering an adaptive and innovative work environment. With the rise of e-learning and online training platforms, HRM in higher education institutions can offer continuous learning opportunities that are flexible and accessible to a diverse workforce. In the digital era, employees expect the opportunity to enhance their skills without the constraints of physical space or time (Kaufman et al., 2022).

According to a study by Evans et al. (2022), HR departments that invest in fostering a culture of innovation through digital platforms can drive change at all levels of the institution. Digital tools such as collaborative project management software and innovation hubs allow faculty and staff to contribute ideas and collaborate on initiatives that promote institutional growth.

The relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and job satisfaction has long been a subject of academic interest. In the context of higher education institutions, this relationship is further complicated by the increasing reliance on digital tools and technologies, which influence how HRM strategies are implemented and perceived by employees. As the digital era reshapes organizational practices, understanding the influence of HRM on job satisfaction within higher education institutions is crucial. In the context of job satisfaction, various studies have highlighted the role of HRM practices such as clear communication, fair performance evaluations, and opportunities for professional growth (Kumar et al., 2020). According to the results of the survey conducted by Şükranli, D. (2020), digitalization is strongly tied to employee productivity because digitalization improves employee happiness, which leads to an increase in staff productivity. Additionally, challenges such as digital burnout have emerged, as faculty members struggle to balance the increased workload brought on by digital tools with their personal lives (Gupta & Sharma, 2022). This demonstrates that while digital tools can improve HRM efficiency, they must be used thoughtfully to maintain faculty engagement and satisfaction. Studies show that digital learning platforms significantly contribute to job satisfaction by empowering employees to take control of their career growth (Poh, 2024). By providing access to personalized learning resources, HR departments can support employees in

Neha Arora

achieving their professional goals. Moreover, online learning tools also help employees build a sense of competence and self-efficacy, which are key determinants of job satisfaction (Przytuła et al., 2023). The flexibility of digital learning is particularly important for faculty and administrative staff in higher education, as it helps them maintain a healthy balance between work responsibilities and professional development. Another crucial factor gaining increasing attention in recent years, particularly within the context of higher education institutions (HEIs) is Quality of Work life balance (QWL). In this review, we explore existing literature on the relationship between HRM practices and QWL in higher education institutions, particularly in light of digital transformations that have altered the nature of work. The term Quality of Work Life (QWL) refers to the overall well-being of employees, including aspects like job satisfaction, work-life balance, personal growth, and organizational support. The quality of work life is integral to employee motivation, engagement, and productivity, all of which have a direct impact on the performance and success of an institution (Warr, 2020).

Literature suggests that HEIs that prioritize QWL tend to have more motivated and committed employees. A study by Zohra and Nadeem (2020) emphasizes that faculty members' QWL in HEIs is influenced by organizational support, opportunities for career advancement, and job autonomy. These factors, when managed effectively through HRM strategies, can lead to higher job satisfaction and productivity. However, research on QWL in the digital era has begun to shift focus on remote working, digital communication tools, and the potential impact of technology-induced stress (Baptiste, 2020). While digital tools enhance flexibility and connectivity, they can also lead to issues such as work-life boundary blurring and digital fatigue, which negatively impact QWL (Pfeiffer et al., 2018). Digital transformation has brought about significant changes in HRM practices. In particular, the increased use of technology for communication, recruitment, performance monitoring, and training has created new opportunities for improving QWL.

However, study conducted by Gamage (2020) point to the potential downside, such as the over-reliance on technology leading to reduced face-to-face interaction, which may negatively affect employees' mental health and social well-being. However, the boundaries between work and personal life can become increasingly blurred as faculty are expected to engage with technology beyond traditional working hours. Digital burnout, caused by prolonged screen time and constant connectivity, has become a common issue among educators, which negatively affects their QWL (Singh & Kaur, 2023). According to the results of the survey conducted by Şükranli, D. (2020), digitalization is strongly tied to employee productivity because digitalization improves employee happiness, which leads to an increase in staff productivity. Virtual performance appraisals are efficient and can provide faculty with timely feedback, but they may fail to capture the qualitative aspects of a faculty member's performance, such as teaching style, mentoring effectiveness, and contributions to the academic community (Sharma et al., 2020). While existing literature acknowledges the importance of HRM strategies in enhancing QWL, there are several areas that warrant further exploration like AI-driven HRM practices are gaining traction in recruitment and performance management, there is a lack of studies examining how these technologies specifically impact QWL in HEIs (Vidal et al., 2019). The effects of digital technology on employees' mental health and well-being remain under-explored, particularly in academic environments. Research should investigate how HRM strategies can mitigate digital fatigue and enhance psychological well-being. Another under-researched area is the intersection of HRM strategies with diversity,

equity, and inclusion (DEI) in HEIs. How HRM can create inclusive, supportive environments for all employees—especially in the digital context—requires more attention (Jain et al., 2022). Given the rise of hybrid or remote teaching, understanding how HRM strategies can maintain employee engagement and motivation in virtual environments in HEIs is crucial.

Research Gap:

The digital revolution in higher education institutions (HEIs) has drastically transformed organizational structures, jobs processes, and teaching-learning dynamics. The widespread adoption of digital technology, ranging from virtual educational platforms to advanced administrative systems, has raised new demands for teachers, staff, and administrators. In this perpetually evolving landscape, Human Resource Management (HRM) plays an increasingly substantial part in assuring job satisfaction and improving the quality of work life (QWL).

Despite extensive research on HRM practices in traditional work environments, comparatively fewer attention has been confined to the specific impact of digitalization (e.g., virtual communication platforms, AI-driven performance management, e-learning systems) on higher education institutions and its relationship to HRM, job satisfaction, and QWL.

METHODOLOGY:

Rationale of the study:

1.   It has been discovered that a significant gap exists after a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on the aforementioned variables. A specific focus on HRM's involvement in strengthening these variables in higher education institutions throughout this digital revolution is underexplored and needs more substantial study.

2.   There has been extensive research on HRM methods in the digital era in the business sector but there is a scarcity of studies on HEIs, where work culture, academic aims, and employee expectations may differ.

3.   Furthermore, this study will fill that vacuum by exploring how HRM practices can be enhanced to strengthen job satisfaction and the quality of work life in HEIs in the digital age.

Objectives:

1.   To explore the influence of Human Resource Management on job satisfaction and quality of work life among employees among higher education institutions in Digital Era

2.   To investigate the impacts (positive and negative) of job satisfaction and quality of work life among employees of higher education institutions in Digital Era

Sample:

All the research that was relevant and was based on employees in higher education institutions was included in the analysis.

Design:

This present study adapts a qualitative research methodology on secondary data. The focus lies on the identification, analysis, and interpretation of qualitative data patterns derived from the original dataset and its outcomes.

Procedure:

To fulfil the objectives of the present research, literatures related to it were thoroughly investigated. The database preferred for this procedure were Google Scholar and SCOPUS. The keyword used were 'job satisfaction'; 'quality of work life' 'Human Resource Management; 'Digitalization', 'employees', 'educational institutions'; and 'India education institution'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

A theme Analysis was conducted in this study that focuses exclusively on employees at Higher Educational Institutions in India. A

systematically approach was adopted to identify both positive and negative themes. The guidelines implied by Braun and Clarke (2006) were carried out.
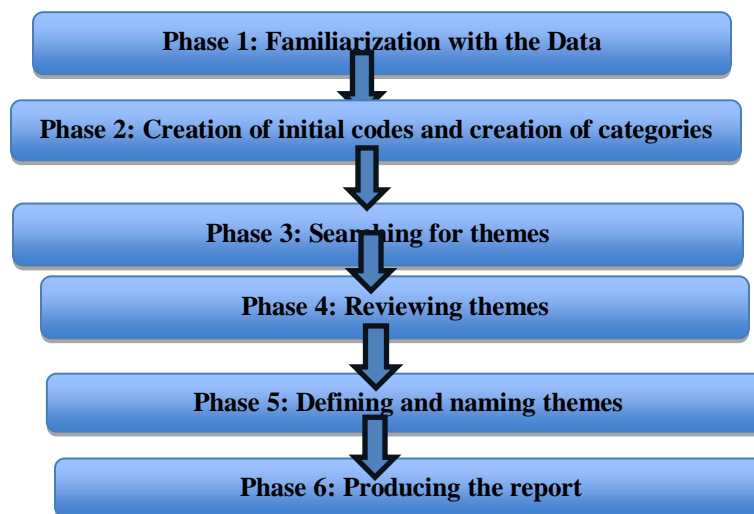

Figure 1: Thematic analysis steps adopted from Braun and Clarke, 2006

An extensive examination of previously published content was accomplished, incorporating exploratory research, review studies, and other relevant sources. The foremost objective of this study was to identify and extract reoccurring themes. The articles deemed most relevant were compiled using predefined criteria for inclusion. During this stage, numerous themes emerged.

Subsequently a comprehensive examination and eradicating reiterated themes, inadequately articulated concepts, and those irrelevant to the stated objectives, a subset of positive and negative impacts was identified. Each theme illustrates a distinct connection between job satisfaction and quality of work life. The present research focuses at both positive and adverse impacts. Several themes have been identified from a survey of previous literature:
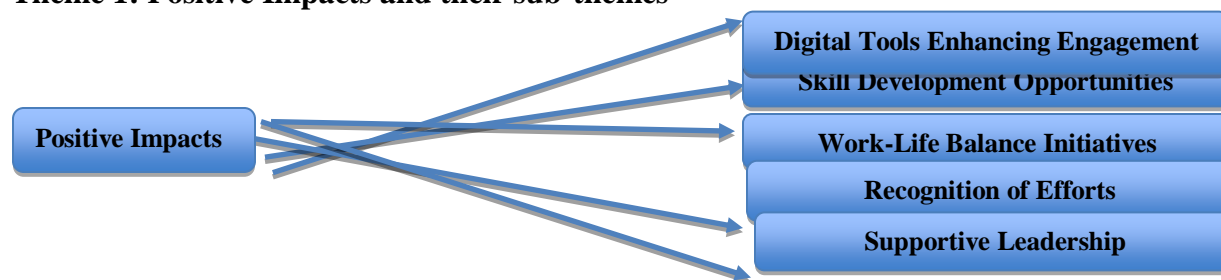
Theme 1: Positive Impacts and their sub-themes

Figure 2: Themes extracted from the review of literature (Arora et al., 2024)

Digital Tools Enhancing Engagement. Digital tools have significantly enhanced employee engagement by improving communication, collaboration, and feedback loops, which foster inclusivity and organizational trust (Melnyk et al., 2023).

Skill Development Opportunities. E-learning platforms and continuous training opportunities contribute to career growth and self-efficacy, enabling employees to achieve personal and professional development (Kaufman et al., 2022; Przytuła et al., 2023).

191

Neha Arora

Work-Life Balance Initiatives. Work-life balance initiatives, such as flexible scheduling and remote work options, allow employees to better manage professional and personal responsibilities, thereby improving their overall quality of life (Raza et al., 2023; Przytuła et al., 2023).

Recognition of Efforts. Additionally, transparent performance appraisals and fair compensation systems play a vital role in enhancing employee satisfaction and retention (Sinha & Chaudhary, 2024; Gul et al., 2023).

Supportive Leadership. Furthermore, inclusive leadership and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives foster a supportive work environment where employees feel respected and valued (Buhler, 2021; Jain et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Negative impacts and their sub-themes

However, the analysis also highlights several negative impacts of HRM practices in this context.
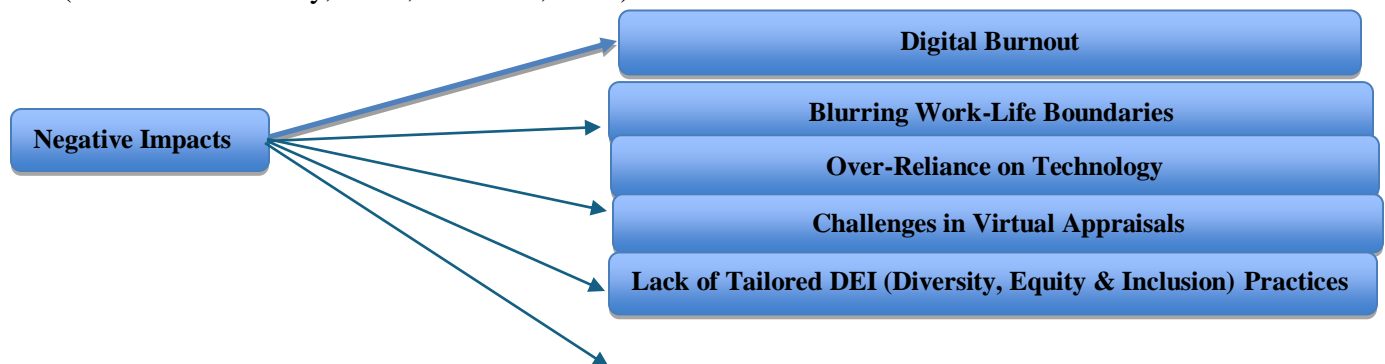

Figure 3: Themes extracted from the review of literature (Arora et al., 2024)

Digital Burnout. Digital burnout has emerged as a significant issue, with excessive screen time and constant connectivity leading to stress and fatigue, thereby adversely affecting job satisfaction and QWL (Gupta & Sharma, 2022; Singh & Kaur, 2023).

Blurring Work-Life Boundaries. The blurring of work-life boundaries, often caused by expectations for employees to remain digitally accessible beyond working hours, exacerbates work-life imbalances (Pfeiffer et al., 2018; Przytuła et al., 2023).

Over-Reliance on Technology. An over-reliance on technology reduces face-to-face interactions, affecting interpersonal relationships and emotional well-being (Gamage, 2020).

Challenges in Virtual Appraisals. Additionally, virtual performance appraisals, while efficient, may fail to capture qualitative aspects of performance, such as teaching effectiveness and mentoring capabilities, which are crucial in academic settings (Sharma et al., 2020).

Lack of Tailored DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) Practices. Limited integration of DEI efforts in HRM strategies further diminishes inclusivity and equitable treatment (Jain et al., 2022).

Suggested solutions:

- To optimize the positive impacts of HRM practices, organizations should develop comprehensive strategies addressing multiple sub-themes.
- By facilitating smooth communication, cooperation, and feedback mechanisms that promote inclusivity and trust inside the business, digital tools can be used to improve employee engagement.
- Furthermore, offering employees opportunities for skill development through e-learning platforms and continuous training sessions fosters their career development and increases their self-efficacy, which results in both professional and personal advancement.

192

- Initiatives for work-life balance, like remote work choices and flexible scheduling, are essential for enabling employees in balancing their personal and professional obligations and, eventually, improving their overall quality of life.

This thematic analysis clearly correlates with the purpose of the current study, which is to determine the influence of HRM on job satisfaction and quality of work of employees in higher education institutions in digital era. There are both positive and negative impacts.

5. Conclusion:

In conclusion, organizational success depends on the effective implementation of HRM approaches that prioritize satisfying employee experiences. The connection between HRM, job satisfaction and quality of work life at higher education institutions is a matter of significant concern. The review of literature emphasized that taking these constructs into consideration can have a significant impact on employees' overall well-being, quality of work life and productivity.

It is imperative for higher education institutions to recognize the utmost importance of establishing secured and compassionate workplaces for their employees, in order to promote a positive working environment.

Implications & Future Scope of the Research:

- According to the findings, institutions of higher learning should establish a successful work environment by utilizing digital technologies for participation, offering chances for ongoing skill development, and encouraging work-life balance through flexible scheduling.
- Future research could delve further into the specific programmes and regulations that institutions can use to improve employee outcomes in terms

of job satisfaction and quality of work life.

- For better and more thorough understanding of the role of Strategic HRM and the factors impacting the Job Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life, supplementing quantitative data with qualitative research methods.

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Neha Arora

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194

Neha Arora

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Neha Arora