

Socially responsible HRM and perceived workplace inclusion: the mediating role of psychological safety and moderating role of responsible leadership



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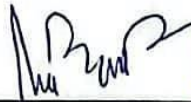
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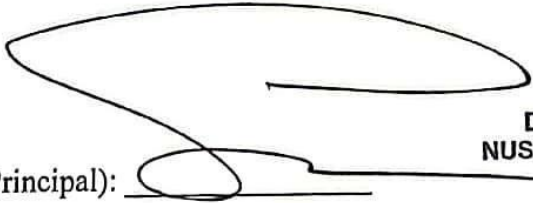
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I hereby state that no portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other University or other institute of learning.

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Socially Responsible HRM and Perceived Workplace Inclusion: The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety and Moderating Role of Responsible Leadership

Abstract

In contemporary organizations, the emphasis is on incorporating a diverse workforce into their structure. However, it is crucial to highlight whether this diverse workforce truly experiences a perception of workplace inclusion. The perception of workplace inclusion by employees is essential for fully harnessing the benefits of a diverse workforce. One of the United Nations' sustainable development goals “An inclusive world by 2030”, further underscoring the relevance and significance of this topic. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the connection between socially responsible HRM practices (specifically, legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM) and employees' perception of workplace inclusion on the theoretical foundation of signaling theory. Additionally, this study aims to examine the mediating role of psychological safety and moderating role of responsible leadership. By using a survey questionnaire, the data is collected from employees working in the banking sector of Pakistan. The study used a total of 270 usable questionnaires for the final data analysis. The collected data is analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0.

The results of this study suggests that the implementation of socially responsible HRM practices, including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM, can serve as a valuable means of promoting psychological safety among employees. Additionally, this study found that psychological safety plays a crucial role in fostering employees' perception of workplace inclusion. Furthermore, the findings indicates that psychological safety acts as a mediator between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion. Surprisingly, responsible leadership does not demonstrate any moderating effect on the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. Despite its importance, research on the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion remains scarce. Consequently, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature by examining the interplay between two key forms of socially responsible HRM practices, legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM, and their effect on employees' psychological safety and perceived workplace inclusion.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the backdrop of the research as well as the gaps in the literature that are pertinent to the subject of this study. The chapter also provides the context of the study, within which this research is conducted. Afterward, the objectives and research questions of the study are outlined. Towards the end of the chapter, the scope, significance of the study and the thesis structure are discussed.

1.2 Background of the Study

Technological advancements, telecommunication and improved infrastructure have resulted in an enormously diversified workforce working all over the world in areas and cultures they previously knew nothing about (Deepak & Perwez, 2019). Such workforce can boost an organization's ability to innovate, challenge conventional wisdom, and do well monetarily (Mckinsey, 2021). However, one of the biggest challenges for companies is to create inclusive work environment where people from all backgrounds feel included (Burke et al., 2013). Organizations can only benefit fully from insights of a diversified workforce if their employees clearly perceive workplace inclusion (Sancier-Sultan & Sperling-Magro, 2019). As a result, employee attitudes such as job satisfaction (Brimhall et al., 2014) and work outcomes (Shore et al., 2011) improve. Moreover “An inclusive world” by 2030 is one of the United Nations' sustainable development goals (United Nation, 2020). Josh Bersin, a HR industry analyst and thought leader, believes that businesses that encourage diversity and inclusion in all areas of their operations outperform their competitors statistically (Bersin, 2018).

A recent survey of World Economic Forum (WEF) highlights that people are switching jobs in almost every industry worldwide at a rate that has never witnessed before (WEF, 2022b). Another survey by Explorance (2021) indicates that 40% of executives and nearly half of workers surveyed do not think that their feedback results in significant change. Research indicated that employees place more value on an inclusive organization and if they could find the same position, they would quit a company for the one with more inclusion (Umoh, 2017). Another study highlighted that 86% of workers believe that their coworkers are not heard fairly

or equitably at work, with 47% reporting that their bosses completely undervalue the opinions of those who are underrepresented (Marcroft, 2021). So, it can be assumed that, those who feel their opinions or feedback does not valued perceives lack of workplace inclusion.

Glassdoor's Survey reported that inclusion at workplace is important to employees and job seekers (76%) when evaluating companies and employment offers (Glassdoor, 2020). A survey conducted by Mckinsey reveals that respondents claim to have declined or decided not applying for a job due to a perceived lack of inclusion at a company (Mckinsey, 2021). These statistics demonstrate a significant lack of workplace inclusion worldwide. Thus, it can be inferred that in order to gain competitive advantage not only attractive compensation package, but workplace inclusion is also an important factor to draw in and keep talented diverse workforce.

Shore et al. (2017) in their literature review on workplace inclusion concludes that there is a need to find ways so that diversity is not seen as a liability but rather as a potential asset. Hatipoglu and Inelmen (2018) states that by convention, perception of workplace inclusion is essential to the discipline of Human Resource Management (HRM) as it ensures justice and gives employees a say in workplace challenges and opportunity to influence decision-making. The employees are referred in the HRM literature as a key participant who are an essential instrument to achieving corporate objectives (Shen, 2011). Diversity scholars have argued for the significance of organizational environments where "diversity is pervasive and part of an overall perspective and strategy that is inclusive of all employee differences, and these differences themselves are considered opportunities for both individual and organizational learning" (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002, p. 324) as a result of the ongoing struggle for certain groups of people to achieve success. HRM practices plays a critical role in developing organizations environment.

An alteration in this viewpoint, however, led to a rise in interest in responsibility and ethics in the HRM domain (e.g. Jamali et al., 2015; Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016). Contemporary HRM practices are acknowledged to have a significant impact on employee emotional and physical well-being in accordance with contemporary firms' social responsibility and sustainability approaches (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2015). Particularly, the socially responsible HRM practices are believed as an important predictor of both individual and organizational outcomes (Shen & Benson, 2016).

The idea of Socially Responsible Human Resources Management (SRHRM) was first developed in 2011 by Shen and Jiuhua Zhu. Socially responsible HRM is employee focused

HRM, with roots in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and HRM literature. Also it has been tested that socially responsible HRM practices generate positive behaviors among employees for e.g. organizational commitment (Shen & Jiu-hua Zhu, 2011) and employee engagement (Hammon et al., 2022). Socially responsible HRM practices provides workers with care, connection, support, and a greater sense of self-worth in organization (He et al., 2020). Odriozola et al. (2015) reveals that among the 100 most reputable enterprises in Spain, socially responsible HRM practices implemented for employees had a direct and beneficial impact on the company's image. Additionally, the emergence of international standards and guidelines aimed at promoting corporate social responsibility in the field of Human Resource Management, such as the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), which stress the necessity of adopting socially responsible HRM policies and practices that promote nondiscriminatory HR practices, decent work for employees and human rights protection to increase sustainable development, are indicative of the significance of socially responsible HRM (Diaz-Carrion et al., 2018).

Socially responsible HRM holds significant importance in organizations operating in Pakistan as socially responsible organizations not only fulfill their legal obligations and economic requirements but also prioritize their ethical responsibilities towards employees (Iqbal et al., 2019). By implementing ethical and socially responsible HRM practices, organizations can reap numerous benefits for example Mughal and Khan (2022) in their recent study found that socially responsible HRM practices can effectively influence job engagement and organization citizenship behaviour among nurses in public sector hospitals in Pakistan. Implementing socially responsible HRM practices in SME's in Pakistan can leads long-term sustainability of the organization (Ullah et al., 2021). Although aforementioned studies highlights that socially responsible HRM leads to many favourable outcomes, however its impact on workplace inclusion should be examined. In a diverse country like Pakistan, nurturing an inclusive work environment is of paramount importance (Solangi, 2023).

Diversity and inclusion offer numerous benefits and organizations in Pakistan can unlock advantages such as improved decision-making, enhanced creativity, increased employee engagement and retention, and a stronger reputation by embracing diverse workforce and build an inclusive workplace for all (Solangi, 2023). This approach creates a dynamic and vibrant workplace that promotes a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

1.3 Research Gaps

After a comprehensive review of literature, the present study identified several voids that are required to be addressed. Firstly, limited research has been conducted on the factors that develop perceived workplace inclusion (Ding & Riccucci, 2022; Garg & Sangwan, 2021; Mousa, 2020). Furthermore, perceived workplace inclusion has typically been studied as an antecedent of employee outcomes (Findler et al., 2007; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Innstrand & Grødal, 2021; Mousa & Puhakka, 2019). However, literature suggests that employees respond positively when organizations' practices and policies are socially responsible (Nie et al., 2018; Shen & Benson, 2016). Therefore, this study examines socially responsible HRM practices as an antecedent of perceived workplace inclusion, a novel and intriguing concept that has been covered in limited recent publications. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical research on socially responsible HRM (Ramos-González et al., 2022) and the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion has not been widely studied. Consequently, this study responds to these research gaps and contributes to understand the importance of socially responsible HRM practices in perceived workplace inclusion. Garg and Sangwan, (2021) have previously identified that HRM practices can foster workplace inclusion. Thus, this study expands the understanding by examining the effects of socially responsible HRM practices on employee perceptions of workplace inclusion.

Secondly, the current study examined individual socially responsible HRM practices, specifically legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM, to better understand how these unique practices impact psychological safety and perceived workplace inclusion. In the past, most studies employed a bundle approach when studying socially responsible HRM (He et al., 2020; Shao, Zhou, Gao, et al., 2019; Shen & Benson, 2016; Shen & Zhang, 2017; Zhao et al., 2021, 2022). These studies used socially responsible HRM as a composite construct without considering its individual functions. However, it has been recommended that the individual dimensions of socially responsible HRM should be considered since each dimension has a different impact on the outcome variable, making the study more valid and generalizable (Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011). The present study fills this gap by examining the unique effects of legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM on psychological safety and perceived workplace inclusion.

Furthermore, the mediating effect of psychological safety between socially responsible HRM practices and outcomes has rarely been examined. In past, Psychological safety has been

studied as a mediator in multiple studies (e.g Fu et al., 2022; Mao & Tian, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). However, Mansour et al. (2022) recommended to study mediating role of psychological safety between organizational level factors such as HRM practices and employee outcomes. Sobhani et al. (2021) recommended that the impact of socially responsible HRM on employees' psychological processes should be considered. When there is a diverse work force in the organization there is a varying level of psychological safety among employees which needs to be tested (White, 2022). Therefore, this study addresses this gap and responds to research calls by investigating the mediating effect of psychological safety between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion. Including psychological safety provides a better understanding of how socially responsible HRM practices affect perceived workplace inclusion from employees' perspective.

Moreover, the moderating role of responsible leadership between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety is scantily studied in the academic literature. The current study specifically tested the moderating role of responsible leadership between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. Because legal compliance HRM practices are obligatory, focused on the adherence to rules and regulations, rather than creating employee-centric environment, which may not require responsible leadership in an organization (Waldman et al., 2020). In contrast, the implementation of employee-oriented HRM may requires active leadership involvement due to the discretionary nature of these practices (Hu & Jiang, 2018; Newman et al., 2015). Employee-oriented leaders such as responsible leader can play a crucial role in establishing a supportive work environment for employees and safeguarding their well-being (Zhao & Zhou, 2019). Recent research recommends considering leadership as moderator between HRM practices and employee outcomes (Mehmood et al., 2022) specifically, responsible leadership (Dong & Zhong, 2022). The present study addresses this gap and respond to the recent call by investigating whether responsible leadership provides a synergistic effect with employee-oriented HRM to enhance employee psychological safety.

Lastly, despite the importance of workplace inclusion evolved across the globe, little research has been done in the past that highlighted the issue in the Pakistani context (Khan et al., 2020), notably in the banking sector. Due to lack of research in this context, there is a substantial knowledge gap prevails about the opportunities and obstacles associated to diversity and inclusion within banking industry in Pakistan. It's imperative to fill this void to comprehend

the challenges faced by underrepresented groups, strategize and implement effective and efficient practices that foster workplace inclusion in the banking sector of Pakistan.

1.4 Problem Statement

Organizational diversity and inclusion are critical global issues in the 21st century. In fact, several nations have made it mandatory for workers of all ages, genders, and backgrounds to demonstrate their support for diversity in the workplace. As this topic has gained global attention and importance over the years, it has become a factor for employees when selecting companies that actively promote and carefully employ a diverse workforce. However, an organization may be as diverse as it intends to be, but inclusion is crucial for maintaining diversity in the workplace (Mckinsey, 2021). While organizations and leadership have shown positive intent and increased conversation in the area of diversity and inclusion, progress has been slow, and it may take another 151 years to eliminate the gender gap in the global economy at all levels (Mckinsey, 2023). A recent survey by Deloitte (2022) highlighted that if a company cannot uphold its commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, 40% of its employees will leave, and 56% will not recommend it as a place to work. The findings indicate that diversity and inclusion should be a top priority for companies seeking to recruit and retain the most talented employees. Moreover, evidence has revealed a lack of inclusion in the organizations in Pakistan (Fatima, 2021; WEF, 2022a) further elevating the importance of the topic. Socially responsible HRM practices including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM along with responsible leadership interventions can be invaluable in improving perceived workplace inclusion among employees by promoting psychological safety. However, the effect of socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion has received little to no attention in the academic literature. Thus, the present study is timely in addressing these issues.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between legal compliance HRM and psychological safety.
2. To examine the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.
3. To examine the relationship between psychological safety and perceived workplace inclusion.

4. To investigate the mediating effect of psychological safety between the relationship of legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.
5. To investigate the mediating effect of psychological safety between the relationship of employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.
6. To investigate the moderating effect of responsible leadership between the relationship of employee-oriented socially responsible HRM practice and psychological safety.

1.6 Research Questions

In order to achieve the defined study goals, the following research questions have been addressed:

1. Does legal compliance HRM have an impact on psychological safety of employees?
2. Does employee-oriented HRM have an impact on psychological safety of employees?
3. Does psychological safety has an impact on perceived workplace inclusion?
4. Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion?
5. Does psychological safety mediate the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion?
6. Does responsible leadership moderate the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety?

1.7 Operational Definitions

1.7.1 Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (HRM)

Socially responsible HRM practices can be defined as “HRM practices aimed at improving employee socially responsible capabilities, motivations and opportunities, often with humanitarian objectives and benefits” (He et al., 2020, p. 347).

1.7.1.1 Legal Compliance HRM

Legal compliance HRM is defined as “adoption of policies and practices that ensure firms are compliant with legislation on equal employment opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage and the use of child labour and forced labour” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442).

1.7.1.2 Employee-oriented HRM

Employee-oriented HRM is defined as “HRM practices addresses employees’ personal and family needs and so goes beyond what is required by law” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442).

1.7.2 Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership is defined as “an orientation or mind-set taken by people in executive level positions toward meeting the needs of a firm’s stakeholder(s). As such, it deals with defining those stakeholder(s), assessing the legitimacy of their claims, and determining how those needs, expectations, or interests can and should best be served” (Waldman et al., 2020, p. 5).

1.7.3 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is defined as "the belief that the work environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmondson, 2018, p. 8).

1.7.4 Perceived Workplace Inclusion

Perceived workplace inclusion is defined as “the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organizational processes and is represented by the extent to which members have access to information and resources, workgroup involvement, and participation in decision making” (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998, p. 48).

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study primarily focuses on investigating the concept of perceived workplace inclusion in banking sector of Pakistan. To the best of researcher’s knowledge, the concept of perceived workplace inclusion has rarely been studied in banking sector by previous studies which make this study one of its kind. The study provides invaluable implications for practitioners in the industry by testing that perception of workplace inclusion among employees can be improved if employees feel psychological safety. For engendering psychological safety among employees, socially responsible HRM including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM) should be incorporated in the organizations. An ideal HR system should

provide workers with constructive feedback, plan for their trainings and professional development, provide fair compensation, and refrain from increasing work hours that can interfere with their ability to manage their personal and professional life. Hence, HRM managers should be acknowledged for their functional role in developing socially responsible initiatives by senior management in the banking industry.

1.9 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprised of five chapters along with references and appendices as follows: Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the research's background, including a brief discussion of perceived workplace inclusion and Human Resource Management. The problem statement, questions, gap analysis, research objectives, and the questions that are developed in order to meet those objectives are then presented, along with the study's context and operational definitions. Chapter 2 covers a literature review that deals with critical analysis of the previously published literature. Theoretical conceptualization of variables including socially responsible HRM and its practices including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM, responsible leadership, psychological safety, and perceived workplace inclusion have thus been explained under this chapter. In addition, a review of the literatures on this study's variables, a detailed discussion of the signaling theory, which established the theoretical foundation for this study, the conceptual framework of the study, and research hypotheses based on the literature are included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 which centers on research methodology, research philosophy, research design, approach, techniques and measurement instruments employed in this study are covered in detail. This chapter also offers an extensive discussion of the data collection process. Chapter 4 of this thesis discuss the findings from the analytical procedures that are applied to the collected data in order to test the developed hypotheses. The chapter begins with a preliminary data screening, descriptive statistics, reliability, and validity tests. The findings of the hypothesis testing using SmartPLS are eventually provided for direct, indirect, and moderation effects. The final chapter of this thesis, chapter 5, reveals the findings of the study. This chapter elaborates the main findings of the study, potential contributions or implications for both researchers and practitioners, as well as the study's limitations. Lastly, a brief conclusion wraps up the chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter's goal is to discuss the study's theoretical background by referencing the context of the research issue. This chapter goes into detail about the importance of the study by highlighting the prevalent issues based on statistical evidence and gaps in the past literature and develops specific questions and objectives. In this section, the operationalization of the constructs are provided in order to demonstrate how the study defines the constructs. Thesis structure, which provides an overall description of its layout, concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an extensive review of the existing literature on the constructs of the study. The chapter is structured in the following way: at first the conceptualization of the constructs has been discussed, followed by an explanation of signaling theory which an underpinning theory for this study. After summarizing previous literature, the chapter discussed the ways in which the current study differs from them. Additionally, the study formulated hypotheses based on signaling theory and existing literature. A conceptual framework is then developed, and the chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2 Definitions of Constructs

2.2.1 *Socially Responsible HRM*

The link between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Human Resource Management (HRM) has emerged as an intriguing, fruitful, and lucrative area of research. The way CSR is perceived, planned, and implemented is significantly influenced by HRM (Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016). The relationship between CSR and HRM can be crucial for organizations to, for example, understand the ethical presumptions about their position in society, enhance their relationships with employees (Voegtlin & Greenwood, 2016) and resolve conflictual interests of diverse stakeholders that may evolve while implementing socially responsible initiatives (Omidi & Dal Zotto, 2022). Human Resource Management practices that combine employee management with CSR can increase employees' commitment and drive to participate in a company's CSR initiatives (Stahl et al., 2020). Lee et al. (2022) claims that socially responsible HRM is one such set of HRM practices.

In the literature review on socially responsible HRM, Omidi and Zotto (2022) concluded that there have been various efforts made by researchers to conceptualize the notion of socially responsible HRM, but no consensus on its precise definition has been attained till date. Most of the studies followed Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu (2011) conceptualization of socially responsible HRM as “a set of HRM practices adopted by organizations to affect employee attitudes and behaviors to facilitate the implementation of external corporate social responsibility (CSR)

initiatives” (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2018; Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Zhang, 2017). Barrena-Martínez et al. (2019, p. 2551) defined socially responsible HRM as “those policies that companies integrate into their human resource management area in a voluntary way and with a dual purpose; (1) to meet the ethical, social, labor and human concerns of their employees, promoting their employees’ satisfaction and proper development in the company (2) to confer added value to the businesses in regard to their human capital”.

Shen and Benson (2016, p. 1) defined socially responsible HRM as “corporate social responsibility (CSR) directed towards employees, underpins the successful implementation of CSR”. Kundu and Gahlawat (2015, p. 4) defined the construct as “those HR activities that are aimed to enhance the employees’ participative role in CSR while considering them both as a transmitter and recipient of CSR practices”. Current study is following the definition by He et al. (2020, p. 347) which refers socially responsible HRM as “HRM aimed at improving employee socially responsible capabilities, motivations and opportunities, often with humanitarian objectives and benefits”.

Workforce or the human component of a firm, is one of its most important resources, and human resource management is essential to gain a competitive edge. According to Nishii et al. (2008), employees' attitudes and behaviors at work are influenced by their perceptions of whether HR policies are designed as a means of upholding moral standards in employment relationships or only as a tactic to recruit and retain qualified personnel. In this line, Brammer et al. (2007) outlined their opinion that corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical practices can only be implemented when employees are contented with the treatment they receive at work. The adoption of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices that address employee-related matters, such as creation of socially responsible culture in the organization, promote ethical behavior in workplace interactions, equal treatment for all employees and ecologically sound workplaces, are current endeavor for HR professionals (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2018). Authors stated that corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices that put the needs of the employees first are also known as social responsible HRM practices (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2018; Shen & Benson, 2016).

Orlitzky and Swanson in (2006) originally proposed socially responsible HRM as a theoretical concept in response to the difficulty of incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into organizational operations. Shen and Jiu Hua Zhu (2011) incorporated the notion of CSR into

HRM practices, identified socially responsible HRM as a new HRM practice targeted at increasing employee participation in corporate social responsibility initiatives. Authors also outlined two main components of socially responsible HRM: legal compliance HRM (LC-HRM) and employee-oriented HRM (EO-HRM) which will be discussed later in this study.

Socially responsible organizations will inevitably uphold the socially responsible HRM elements which are comprised of legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM in order to not only comply with existing national and international laws, but also to push the envelope in order to foster better employee performance (Farmanesh et al., 2018). A study conducted by Omid and Zotto (2022) identified factors that drives or hinder the adoption of socially responsible HRM practices in the organizations. The antecedents mainly includes laws and regulations (Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011; Tongo, 2015) strategic level policies and practices (Barrena-Martinez et al., 2018) organizational culture and structure (Espasandín-Bustelo et al., 2021) importance or power of HRM role in the organization (Heikkinen et al., 2021) pressure from unions and regulatory body i.e. International Labor Organization (Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011) and employee's needs (Newman et al., 2016; Nie et al., 2018; Shen & Zhang, 2017; Tongo, 2015).

Shen and Benson (2016) believes that since it is through employees that the goals of social responsibility are fulfilled, socially responsible HRM is not only a crucial component of social responsibility initiatives but also a key instrument for their successful implementation. In this context, several studies have supported the idea that socially responsible HRM can increase employee commitment (Chanda & Goyal, 2020; Diaz-Carrion et al., 2018; López-Fernández et al., 2018; Mory et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011; Tongo, 2015). Likewise, Shen and Benson (2016) investigated the effect of socially responsible HRM practices on employee support behavior. Other factors which are positively affected by socially responsible HRM includes employee wellbeing (Abdelmotaleb & Saha, 2020; Iqbal et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021), organization citizenship behavior (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2018; He & Kim, 2021; Shao, Zhou, Gao, et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2021), task performance (Shao, Zhou, Gao, et al., 2019), knowledge sharing behavior (Jia et al., 2019), intrapreneurial behavior (Luu, 2020), employee satisfaction (Barrena-Martínez et al., 2017; Chanda & Goyal, 2020). Luu et al. (2022) stated that socially responsible HRM practices are significantly related to job crafting. Organizations can reduce the likelihood of employee's intention to leave the organization (Nie et al., 2018;

Sobhani et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022) and enhance their person-organization fit (Zhao et al., 2021) by using socially responsible HRM practices.

2.2.1.1 Legal Compliance HRM

DeCenzo et al. (2016) have highlighted that legal compliance has grown to be a significant segment of responsibility for HR since legal rights and requirements are crucial to address. Legal compliance HRM require businesses to take into account local labor laws and adhere to the labor standards established by affiliated organizations while implementing HRM policies and practices (Newman et al., 2016; Uddin et al., 2020). Legal compliance HRM is defined as “adoption of policies and practices that ensure firms are compliant with legislation on equal employment opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage and the use of child labour and forced labour” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442). Health and safety is regarded as one of the key functional areas of HRM to ensure the protection of workers' rights at work (Obeidat et al., 2022). As an issue that is both economically significant and socially sensitive, occupational health and safety is governed by formal laws that impose legal obligations on the organization (Fan et al., 2019). Employees who are healthy, motivated, satisfied goes beyond providing favorable business results such as greater profitability and competitiveness (Žižek & Mulej, 2016).

Employee performance is also positively influenced by working conditions that offer flexible or legally regulated work hours and engendered a high degree of job satisfaction, motivation organizational commitment all of which are beneficial to the long-term success of the organization (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Also, employers are required by law to pay their employees for their services as the main purpose is to ensure that an employee's fundamental social and physiological needs are met with the minimal wage received (Ahmad et al., 2016). Furthermore, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has developed the governing framework for outlawing child labor. Organizations are expected to eradicate child labor for prudential, or reputational reasons and to do so delicately in order to act in more responsible way and prevent unethical kinds of work (Alzola, 2018). Such regulatory standards must be monitored to safeguard employee rights and shield corporations from legal liability (DeCenzo et al., 2016).

An organization's ability to comply with labor regulations and avoid legal liabilities is facilitated by taking into account the employee oriented-legal practices (Shen & Zhang, 2017). Employees will have a negative opinion or perception of the entire process if HR practices do not adequately adhere to legal requirements like workplace equality, safety for employees (Richard & Kirby, 1999). In their study, Jackson and Schuler (2006) stated that fairness and equality is frequently emphasized in the corporate cultures of organizations that consistently receive high rankings as the greatest places to work. Authors believes that equality and fairness foster the sense of trust which is required to build a productive workplace. According to previous studies, employing the HRM tools to tackle inequalities in hiring, appraising, promoting, and rewarding employees can promote equitable employment opportunities, increase inclusivity, and boost innovation in a diverse workforce (Goodman et al., 2003; Shen et al., 2009).

According to Taylor (2005) legal compliance is a difficult and delicate aspect of HRM that involves balancing pursuit of profitability, economic goals, and regulatory or legal obligations. Author believes that when taking these, perhaps conflicting elements into account, there may be conflicts of interest that an organization has to deal with. Sloan and Gavin (2010) stated in this regard that the objective of HRM legal compliance needs to be ingrained into the structure of the organization and shared by management and employees to make significant advancements toward becoming responsible and ethical organization. According to Jackson and Schuler (2006) the task of preserving employee legal rights and upholding employer legal obligations are undertaken by HR managers through involving in policy making, keep an eye on HR practices and their implications, and mediate conflicts. In this regard, employees can share the responsibility by reporting unethical and illegal workplace actions and behaviors (Jackson & Schuler, 2006).

2.2.1.2 Employee-Oriented HRM

Employee-oriented HRM is defined as "HRM practices addresses employees' personal and family needs and so goes beyond what is required by law" (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442). Such practices includes, provide workers with organizational justice and support, develop systems of work and job design that take into account human motivational needs, better communication within the firm, promoting participation of employees in decision-making processes by emphasizing the adoption of workplace democracy through employee engagement, involvement, and power sharing (Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011). Employee-

oriented HRM also consider demands of employees for personal growth, such as skill and career developmental opportunities, self-actualization adequate training, mentorship, providing feedback and flexible working conditions (Newman et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2009; Shen & Jihua Zhu, 2011).

Employee-oriented HRM has a flavor of corporate social responsibility. When practices like providing training, feedback and mentoring are used and they take into account each employee's needs for professional development, it reflects that the organization is committed to go above and beyond of what is expected from them by employees (Hu & Jiang, 2018). Furthermore, employee-oriented HRM provide support to employees and endorse their involvement and power sharing, which readily make employees feel appreciated and valued (Hu & Jiang, 2018; Shen & Jihua Zhu, 2011). A study conducted by Kuvaas (2007) also stated that although impression of an organization's human resource procedures and practices depicts an organizational purpose that will probably influence how workers perceive the quality of the relation between themselves and the organization, other elements, such as the demand for work flexibility, security, and power distribution, may also play significant roles. Rhoades et al. (2001) stated that employees' impressions of how much the company values them are based on pertinent HRM policies, practices, and how they have been treated in the past. Employees are far more likely to feel supported, treated morally and ethically and to view the organization's fairness and credibility when they believe that employee-oriented HRM practices are effectively implemented within the workplace (Hu & Jiang, 2018).

HRM practices considering employees needs influence them to reciprocate in the form of more organization citizenship behavior (Alfes et al., 2013) as they respond favorably as organization goes beyond what is mainly expected by employees and start to psychologically connect with the organization (Newman et al., 2016). It is specifically recommended by Sancho et al. (2018) that addressing employee needs and interests will be likely to lessen adverse effects on employees of initiatives taken for external stakeholders, their support for such initiatives increases which ameliorate organizational performance and sustainability over the long run. Shen and Benson (2016) claimed that employee support for the company's socially responsible initiatives is shaped by employee-oriented socially responsible HRM practices.

According to the study conducted by Estifo et al. (2019a) organizational support is one foundational factor through which employee-oriented HRM practices can reduce the

propensity to engage in non-productive work behaviors. According to Hannah and Iverson (2004), supportive HRM policies can be viewed as a sign that an organization values its employees and are thus more likely to be reciprocated by staff members through positive behaviors. Study conducted by Kuvaas (2007) endorsed that investing in employee through HR practices would encourage employees to have a stronger sense of safety and commitment to the firm, which will boost their willingness to put in extra effort to enhance organizational performance.

2.2.2 Psychological Safety

Schein and Bennis (1965) brought psychological safety to the field of organizational behavior, but it is in recent times that empirical research in this field has developed. Authors highlighted psychological safety as a crucial component of organizational learning and development by identifying it as an individual's level of assurance in their capacity to deal with change. Twenty-five years after the pioneering work of Schein and Bennis (1965), Kahn's (1990) study sparked a renewed interest in psychological safety. According to Kahn (1990), psychological safety is a prerequisite for employees to feel engaged and attached to their professional positions. Author defined psychological safety "as feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). Later on in her research on team learning, Edmondson (1999) coined the idea of psychological safety, which she defines as "the belief that the work environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmondson, 2018, p. 8). Conceptualization of psychological safety in current study is based on the definition by Edmondson (2018). Edmondson's (1999) early work positions psychological safety as a group-level construct, in contrast to Schein and Bennis (1965) and Kahn's (1990) concentration on individual views of psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017). Although these ground-breaking works come from various literary genres and cater various levels of analysis, they shouldn't be viewed as opposing points of view but rather as distinct perspectives in fact, all interpretations of the psychological safety construct come together around a single, overarching idea which is establishing an environment at work where employees' perceptions of interpersonal risk are kept to a minimum level (Frazier et al., 2017; White, 2022).

Psychological safety is fundamental for generating value in firms that operate in a complicated and changing environment. It consists of fundamental assumptions about how other will react

when an employee chooses to act in a potentially risky way at work like raising an issue, asking question, giving an idea (Edmondson et al., 2004). In order for employees to feel safe and be able to change their behavior, they need to work in an atmosphere that fosters psychological safety (Kark & Carmeli, 2009; Schein & Bennis., 1965). When employees feel secure and safe psychologically they may express issues and errors without worrying about humiliation or punishment (Edmondson, 2018). Pearsall and Ellis (2011) stated that employees who sense psychological safety at workplace exhibit risky behavior interpersonally such as open communication, asking for feedback and voicing their concerns. In past study, it has been discovered that psychological safety has an impact on a variety of workplace outcomes such as learning and performance (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) and identified the role of leadership in creating psychological safety among employees which in turn effect work outcomes.

For instance, empirical research has shown that, at the individual level, leaders' support (May et al., 2004) openness (Detert & Burris, 2007) and behavioral integrity (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011) have a significant impact on employees' perceptions of psychological safety which in turn affect employee outcomes such as voice behaviors, engagement and performance (Newman et al., 2017). Relationships that go beyond those between a leader and a follower are also linked to psychological safety for instance, supportive work environment, particularly peer support also influence employee psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017; White, 2022).

At team level psychological safety also leads to positive outcomes. Researchers have discovered that team autonomy (Chandrasekaran & Mishra, 2012), formal team structures (Bunderson & Boumgarden, 2009) and shared rewards for teams (Chen & Tjosvold, 2012) are all positively related to higher levels of team psychological safety. According to a literature review conducted by Newman et al. (2017), 62 studies concludes that psychological safety generates positive employee behavioral outcomes e.g. knowledge-sharing (Zhang et al., 2010) voice behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007; Liang et al., 2012) reduction in silence behavior of employees (Brinsfield, 2013) learning behavior (Liu et al., 2014). Work attitudes such as organizational commitment (De Clercq & Rius, 2007), citizenship behavior (Frazier et al., 2017;Iqbal et al., 2019), work engagement (May et al., 2004), also affected by high psychological safety among employees. According to Carmeli et al. (2010) one essential condition for improving employee creativity is for workers to believe that their firm provides a safe atmosphere to work in for all. Yi et al. (2017) in their study also support this stance by

stating that psychologically secure work environment is essential for employees to engage in risky, creative and innovative tasks and activities.

2.2.3 Perceived Workplace Inclusion

Moving from diversity management to inclusion, the organizational literature has changed its emphasis and begun to acknowledge diversity's potential advantages (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998; Shore et al., 2017). Since a decade ago, the term "inclusion" has been used to refer to management procedures that guarantee equality as well as employee feelings of incorporation, connections, and participation in the workplace (Estifo, 1999; Roberson, 2006). Although the field of social psychology had previously developed related fields of research (Brewer, 1991). The phrases diversity and inclusion have historically been used synonymously, diversity refers to the mix of individual differences within a group or organization (Homan & Greer, 2013; Roberson, 2006). On the other hand, Mor Barak (2015) and Shore et al. (2011) consider inclusion as how much employees feel valued for their distinctive qualities and a sense of belonging which makes them feel comfortable presenting their real selves in the workplace.

Examining the current literature on inclusion, it is evident that there is a great deal of debate among scholars over how inclusion should be defined. Aneesya and Avnish (2020) believes that inclusion is a revolution of powerful organizational culture toward a culture that encourages and appreciates the unique features of each employee in the competitive advantage and success of the firm. According to Pearce and Randel (2004) and Tang et al. (2015), inclusion refers to workers' perceptions of their inclusion and acceptance at work. Roberson (2006, p. 217), defined the construct as "the removal of obstacles to employees' full participation and contribution in companies." Lirio et al. (2008, p. 443) consider inclusion at workplace "when individuals feel a sense of belonging, and inclusive behaviors such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees are part of the daily life in the organization." According to Pelled et al. (1999, p. 1014) "The degree to which an employee is recognized and considered as an insider by others in a work environment" is characterized as workplace inclusion. Specifically, current study defined perceived workplace inclusion as "the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organizational processes and is represented by the extent to which members have access to information and resources, workgroup involvement, and participation in decision making" (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998, p. 48).

Despite the fact that inclusion has begun to gain prominence among diversity academics, the study of Mor Barak, predominantly in the field of social work, is a significant exception (Shore et al., 2011). In theoretical framework for inclusion, Mor Barak proposed that organizational culture and diversity would influence how people perceive inclusion and exclusion, which would then influence their job satisfaction, personal well-being, and organizational commitment (Estifo, 1999). A study conducted by Chen and Tang (2018) stated that prior studies on perceived inclusion have mostly been undertaken in context of diversity. For instance, studies have a focus at perceived inclusion among minorities or individuals with disabilities e.g. Fujimoto et al. (2014). Another study discussed why a certain group of people has higher or weaker sentiments of inclusion and how such feelings generate favorable psychological status such as self-esteem or confidence among employees in the workplace using social identity theory (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998).

Past studies also figured out that organizational trends point to a shift in emphasis from the management of diversity such as raising representation of diverse groups and implementing fair human resource policies and practices to the advocacy of inclusion (Nishii, 2013; Rezai et al., 2020). Lirio et al. (2008) claims that it is the organization's continuous efforts enable employees to gain a perception of workplace inclusion. However, authors believed that the organization's efforts to promote diversity in the workplace are essential, but respecting diversity is also crucial and needs to permeate across the organization in order to successfully create a supportive work environment (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; Mansoor et al., 2021). Shore et al. (2017) also stated that innovation in organization can only occur when a workforce is diverse, but this benefit is unlikely to occur without inclusion. Winters (2013) stated that diversity is relatively facile to achieve than inclusion.

The amount to which workforce are encouraged to contribute fully to the organization and the extent to which they perceived that diversity is valued will play a role in fostering perceived workplace inclusion among employees (Joshi & Roh, 2013). Employee perceptions of inclusion were also examined by researchers. Nembhard and Edmondson (2006) studied employees perception about a leader's inclusivity. They revealed that inclusive leadership affect psychological safety of employees, which consequently influenced team engagement. In their study on perceived insider status, Stamper and Masterson (2002) concluded that perceived insider status had a positive relationship with altruism and a negative relationship with production deviation.

Perception of workplace inclusion generates many positive outcomes such as employee engagement (Goswami & Goswami, 2018), organizational commitment and better job performance (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008), positive self-efficacy (Ng et al., 2022), positive perception of justice and better wellbeing (Le et al., 2018), workplace happiness (Mousa, 2020), innovation and job satisfaction (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018) and ultimately, generates financial outcomes for business. Perceived workplace inclusion also reduce negative behavioral and attitudinal outcomes among employees such as conflict among employees, intention to leave, job-withdrawal, stress, and turnover (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Hopkins et al., 2010; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Nishii, 2013). Perceived inclusion in the context of workgroups has also been examined by Shore et al. (2011). Studies on employee perception of workplace inclusion acknowledges that by proactively establishing and sustaining inclusive work environments and leadership support, organizations could decrease issues related to demographic diversity and increase its potential benefits (Le et al., 2021; Nishii, 2013).

2.2.4 Responsible Leadership

There is no way to overstate the value of leaders as they have frequently been at the epicenter of both company successes and failures (Frangieh & Yaacoub, 2018). The phenomena of leadership is incredibly intricate, highly recognized and one of the most studied subject in organizational and management studies (Marques et al., 2018). In a review of leadership studies, Stogdill (1974) noted that there are almost as many diverse definitions of leadership as there are individuals who have attempted to define it. Fleishman et al. (1991) in their study claimed that up to 65 distinct definitions for leadership have been established in previous years. Some academics consider leadership as a behavior or trait, others approach the topic from the perspective of information processing or interpersonal relationships. Northouse (2019, p. 43) in his book define leadership as “a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Several authors believes that leadership philosophies, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical leadership, primarily concentrate on the reciprocal supervisor-subordinate relationship, but they largely ignore how a leader's actions and decisions affect other stakeholders and occasionally fail to adequately serve all stakeholders' interests (Maak & Pless, 2006; Shi & Ye, 2016; Waldman & Galvin, 2008). In this context, Maak and Pless (2006) suggest the idea of responsible leadership from the standpoint of stakeholders.

Maak (2007, p. 334) has defined responsible leadership as the “ability involved in building, cultivating and sustaining trustful relationships to different stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization, and in coordinating responsible action to achieve a meaningful, commonly shared business vision”. Song et al. (2009) also have similar conceptualization and consider responsible leadership to forge beneficial relationships with stakeholders both inside and outside of the firm by actively engaging in corporate social responsibility in order to attain shared goals and benefits. Further examining the meaning of leadership ethics which were previously missing, Voegtlin proposes responsible leadership as a process to resolve conflicts between the interests of all parties involved through open communication and democratic consultation in order to create mutually beneficial outcomes (Voegtlin, 2011; Voegtlin et al., 2012). Current study is based on Waldman et al. (2020, p. 5) definition of responsible leadership which refers to “an orientation or mind-set taken by people in executive level positions toward meeting the needs of a firm’s stakeholder(s). As such, it deals with defining those stakeholder(s), assessing the legitimacy of their claims, and determining how those needs, expectations, or interests can and should best be served”. Researchers believes that responsible leadership fills in the gaps left by existing leadership theories and can successfully balance the competing interests of stakeholders both inside and outside of an organization, consequently advancing corporate reputation, gaining public trust, and ensuring sustainable development of an organization and society (Haque et al., 2017; Maak & Pless, 2006; Shi & Ye, 2016).

Organizational leaders have lost trust and credibility due to immoral behavior and now under more pressure than ever to use their leadership abilities responsibly (Haque et al., 2021; Maak & Pless, 2006). For instance, the need for responsible leadership has been sparked by corporate failures (like Enron), product recalls (like Toyota), environmental ecological damages (e.g. Shell Nigeria, Bhopal) and ethical misconduct in the organization (Haque et al., 2021). As the leader listens and consider other’s viewpoint while making decisions, authenticity of responsible leaders not only promotes learning agility, adaptability, and participation of others but also helps to prevent fraud in an organization (Sarkar, 2016). From a wider viewpoint, responsible leadership represents a notion that lies at the nexus of two main fields of study: leadership and social responsibility (Waldman & Balven, 2014). Several outcomes, including employee engagement (Doh et al., 2011), relational intelligence ((Maak & Pless, 2006)), organization citizenship behavior (Zhao & Zhou, 2019) and organizational commitment, influence the scope of responsibility under responsible leadership (Haque et al., 2017).

Voegtlin et al. (2012) proposed in their study that responsible leadership has a significant favorable effect at various levels of analysis. On a macro level, responsible leaders establish trusting relationships with external stakeholders; on a meso level, they have a significant impact on the culture and social performance of the organization; and on a micro level, they have a positive influence on the attitudes and perceptions of their subordinates (Voegtlin et al., 2012). Social objectives are given special consideration by responsible leadership, which enhances the reputation of the company (Javed et al., 2020). Researchers believe that by emphasizing social, economic, and environmental performance, responsible leaders can encourage the long-term success of their organizations (Afsar et al., 2020; Miska et al., 2014). For maximizing employee performance and accomplishing organizational and social goals, responsible leadership has been advocated by a number of scholars (Doh et al., 2011; Haque et al., 2017).

2.3 Signaling Theory

The signaling theory, which has been used extensively in human resource management research (Estifo et al., 2019; Guest et al., 2021; Karasek & Bryant, 2012; Leahey, 2007; Potnuru et al., 2019) incorporates ideas from social and cognitive psychology, economics, and finance (Guest et al., 2021). Despite the fact that the majority of human resource management and organizational behavior studies have focused on signaling in the processes of attracting hiring and retaining talent (Celani & Singh, 2011; Suazo et al., 2009), studies have also applied signaling theory to employer branding and corporate reputation management research (Bergh et al., 2010; Martin & Groen-in't-woud, 2010; Taj, 2016). Researchers in stream of diversity utilize signaling theory to describe how businesses use diverse boards to convey adherence to societal values to a variety of organizational stakeholders (Miller & Triana, 2009). The information gaps found between firms, potential employees and reducing the information asymmetry between the parties, is at the heart of signaling theory (Dang & Nguyen Viet, 2021; Spence, 2002).

The theory was proposed by Spence in 1973 and he argues that organizational cues and signals determine how employees view an organization's objectives and attributes, including its rules, practices and processes. Avery et al. (2007) in their study clarifies that cues are features of an organization that staff members observe and signals are messages sent by organizations. The signaler, receiver, and signal itself are the central figures in the signaling theory. The signal is

previously unshared, positive or negative information that signalers or senders determine whether to share with receivers or not (Connelly et al., 2011; López-Santamaría et al., 2021). Insiders such as CEOs, executives, and managers are known as signalers because they have access to knowledge about employees, products, and organizations that outsiders or receivers do not (López-Santamaría et al., 2021). Carlini et al. (2019) stated that the founding principle of signalling theory is that information affects decisions made by individuals, groups, and governments. A fundamental tenet of signalling theory is that companies have an obligation to communicate their commitment to the community, to stakeholders and the market through sending signals (López-Santamaría et al., 2021).

Current study build hypothesis on signaling theory which has evolved as a theoretical framework to describe how employees in the organization perceives human resource management practices (Connelly et al., 2011). The theory suggests that organizations frequently send out signals that lessen information gap between them and their stakeholders and allow them to express their organizational image, intentions and behavior (Karaman et al., 2020; López-Santamaría et al., 2021). Turner et al. (2019) states that the initiatives companies choose to implement, whether conventional or socially contentious, inform the public and employees of the company about their value. One of the example is the research conducted by Miller and Triana, (2009) in which they studied the relationship between the Fortune 500 companies' board racial diversity and external evaluations of the company's reputation. They discovered that the outsiders' evaluations of the company improves when board diversity grew.

Spence (1974) stated that employees perceive organizational polices, processes and practices as signals (Ma et al., 2021) and the way these signals are interpreted influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees (Presbitero et al., 2022). One of the past study argues that employees view the company's positive contributions like CSR initiatives (Pfeffer, 2010) simply as indications of the business's support, which typically prompts positive behaviors to the company (Estifo et al., 2019a). In their study, López-Santamara et al. (2021) found that signaling theory is pertinent to the analysis of sustainability practices since these practices promote a positive perception of the company among stakeholders and aid in winning their trust and fostering positive relationships. According to Mansoor et al. (2021) when an organization put forth efforts and take initiatives to foster and value diverse workforce, such signals perceive positively by employees as they make interpretations of the events, procedures, and practices they encounter in organization. Employee perceptions of the

effectiveness of the HRM system have a stronger impact on affective commitment when they perceived to be included and valuable in the organization through the signals organization send through their practices (Connelly et al., 2011; Presbitero et al., 2022). It has been observed that prosocial and informal communication are more likely to occur when leaders support and make employee feel safe to raise their concerns in the organization (Klaas et al., 2012). Socially responsible HRM techniques are more likely to benefit internal stakeholders (Abdelmotaleb and Saha, 2019) and leads to positive outcomes for employees and organizations mainly organizational commitment, performance, satisfaction, trust and motivation (Chanda & Goyal, 2020; Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011) and may also foster psychological safety and perception of workplace inclusion among employees. Because socially responsible HRM practices including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM in an organization send signals to employees about firms' attempt to ensure equality and justice by adhering to legal regulations and meeting employees need by going beyond what is required by laws. Such practices acts as signals that organization support, value and appreciate its employees which makes employees feel psychologically safe in the organizations and ultimately enhance their perception of workplace inclusion. Therefore, signaling theory provide a firm theoretical support to current study.

2.4 Past Studies

Relevant literature is summarized in Table 2.1. The current study is grounded on signaling theory and carried out in Pakistan's banking industry, providing better generalizability and resonance to South Asian countries as compared to previous studies mostly conducted in western and developed countries such as studies conducted by Janssens and Zanoni (2007) and Jung and Welch (2022). The studies conducted by Janssens and Zanoni (2007) and Miminoshvili and Černe (2022) were qualitative in nature whereas current study is quantitative with cross sectional study design. Furthermore, the studies conducted by Miminoshvili and Černe (2022) and Chen and Tang's (2018) identified the consequences of perceived inclusion by considering it as an independent variable whereas current study had identify the factors that leads to perceived workplace inclusion. Jung and Welch (2022) in their study used data from the 2011 National Science Foundation-funded nationwide survey of academic staff in US institutions by using stratified sampling technique whereas current study has collected primary data by using non probability purposive and snowball sampling technique for selecting sample from population. Current study as opposed to the studies conducted by Mousa et al. (2021) and

Jung and Welch (2022) have considered socially responsible HRM as an antecedent of inclusion and examined the impact of socially responsible HRM which included legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM on perceived workplace inclusion. Bhatti et al. (2022) examined how servant leadership, with its emphasis on "serving others," could promote a sense of organizational inclusion through the mediated influence of work meaning for employees. The current study, which is fundamentally different from the study done by Bhatti et al. (2022) examined psychological safety as a mediating variable and responsible leadership as a moderating variable.

Table 2.1. Summary of Literature

Authors	Title	Years	Country	Methodology	Variables
Chen and Tang	Does perceived inclusion matter in the workplace?	2018	China	Quantitative	IV: Perceived inclusion Mediator: Organization commitment, DV: Role based performance.
Janssens and Zanoni	What makes an organization inclusive? Work contexts and diversity management practices favoring ethnic minorities' inclusion	2007	Belgium	Qualitative	
Miminoshvili and Černe	Workplace inclusion–exclusion and knowledge hiding behaviour of minority members	2022	Slovenia	Qualitative	
Mousa et al.	Workplace Fun, Organizational Inclusion and Meaningful Work: an Empirical Study	2021	Egypt	Quantitative	IV: Workplace fun Mediator: Organizational inclusion DV: Meaningful work
Jung and Welch	The Impact of Demographic Composition of Social Networks on Perceived Inclusion in the Workplace	2022	United States	Quantitative	IV: Demographic Composition of Social Networks. DV: perceived inclusion. Moderator: demographic variables.
Bhatti et al.	Organizational inclusion through interaction of work meaningfulness and servant leadership: An artificial neural network approach	2022	Turkey	Quantitative	IV: Servant leadership Mediator: Work meaningfulness DV: Organizational inclusion

2.5 Hypothesis Development

2.5.1 Legal compliance HRM and psychological Safety

Respecting employee rights are beneficial if a firm needs a highly devoted workforce to remain competitive in the marketplace and HR managers must work to ensure equity inside their firms if they want to contribute to that respect (Koys, 1991). Employers' fair practices by providing chances for employee growth, and an emphasis on accommodating employee needs are all examples of social responsibility of an organization towards employees (Turker, 2009). Furthermore, recent research on Chinese employees by Shen and Jiu-hua Zhu (2011) discovered an association between employees' opinions of how compliant their organization is with the law and their commitment to the organization. Employees want assurances from their employers that the corporation won't break key tenets of the employment contract, like fair pay compared to the competition, favorable working conditions, prospects for promotion, and job security (Bauman & Skitka, 2012).

In a recent study, Xiao and Cooke (2022) stated that employees will think managers care deeply about preserving the rights and welfare of their workforce if they perceive HR practices of an organization implemented in a legally compliant manner. Contrarily, managers who violate the legal regulatory standards often send a signal to their staff that they don't care about their legal rights or the health and safety of their workers (Xiao & Cooke, 2022). As a result, workers can anticipate receiving inadequate legal and social resources which will lead to a variety of physical and psychological issues including lack of psychological safety at work (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). The level of psychological safety among employees is shaped by organizational policies and managerial practices (Lee, 2021). Edmondson (2004) in her study stated that in order for employees to be engaged, adopt proactive behaviours, take the initiative, and express their thoughts, psychological safety in the workplace is crucial. Employees become more proactive when they feel protected psychologically, which further enhances their performance at work (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Similarly, a research conducted by Baer and Frees (2003) in Germany found that businesses perform better when their employees feel psychologically safe.

Signaling theory view human resource practices as signals of an organization's intentions regarding its employees (Kooij et al., 2010). Organizational practices including HRM policies and procedures, organizational structure, and communication systems are taken into account

by organizations as means to convey what is expected from employees and their desired behaviours (Bandyopadhyay & Srivastava, 2020). The signals receive from HR practices of organization have a significant impact on psychological safety of employees (Newman et al., 2017). The more distinct, consistent, and consensual signals sent by HR practices increases the likelihood that employees will establish a shared understanding of HR practices (Meier-Barthold et al., 2022). So, drawing on signaling theory it is hypothesized that legal compliance practices of HRM transmit signals about firms' attempts to ensure equality and justice along with adherence to legal norms and rules related to employees, and comprehension of these signals helps employee feel psychological safety in the organization.

H1. Legal compliance HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.

2.5.2 Employee-Oriented HRM and Psychological Safety

Employee-oriented HRM is also an important component of socially responsible HRM since it involves initiatives and practices that directly meet employees' personal and family needs above and beyond legal requirements prescribed for a job (Hu & Jiang, 2018; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011). Employee feel supported, catered, and treated morally and ethically when employee oriented HRM practices (such as skill and career developmental opportunities, adequate trainings for self-actualization, mentorship, and flexible working conditions) are perceived to be well-implemented inside the organization (Hu & Jiang, 2018). Additionally, through the implementation of such practices employees perceive that their employers are committed to their long-term growth, which in turn fosters a sense of fulfillment, job satisfaction and enhances productivity (Whitener, 2001; Yu et al., 2022). According to Mayer et al. (1995), such perception encourage employees to take interpersonal risks in the workplace.

Employees' perceptions of the effects of taking interpersonal risks while working in organization are represented by psychological safety, which includes raising ideas, questions, and concerns (Basit, 2017; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Ma et al (2021) in their study stated that instead of a specific task, psychological safety encapsulates employees' opinions of their working environment. When work environment is perceived safe, there are fewer chances of failure, disappointment, and stress, which lowers the potential of negative behaviours. It has been stated by Bowen and Ostroff (2004) and Barnard and Rodger (2000) that through HR practices workers make sense of their working environment and circumstances. Employee

motivation and performance can both be enhanced by psychological safety, and this can be done by taking steps to meet employees' needs, make them feel cared for, and earn their trust in the company (Pang et al., 2023) which can be done through employee-oriented socially responsible HRM practices. For example, trainings related to certain social and professional skills and competence may help to induce psychological safety. As self-efficacy and performance increase over time and fear of losing a job declines (Obrenovic et al., 2020).

The emphasis of signaling theory is on the deliberate actions organization take to express their underlying positive qualities and as HR procedures evolve over time, employees are informed of the shifting management practices. (Bandyopadhyay & Srivastava, 2020). Newman et al. (2015) stated that because employee oriented-HRM practices delivers a signal that management cares about employees' well-being and respects them morally and ethically, it helps to build employees' trust in management (Newman et al., 2015). Trusting HR procedures and practices can help to induce interpersonal risks taking among employees without fear of consequences at work, which may lead to psychological safety (Maximo et al., 2019). The organization's priority for employee safety, skill development, and career advancement are also signaled by HR procedures (Bandyopadhyay & Srivastava, 2020). So it is assumed that employee-oriented HRM practices can act as a signal that organization value and support its employees which make employees feel safe in organization for taking interpersonal risk and foster psychological safety among employees. Hence, this study hypothesizes that:

H2. Employee-oriented HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.

2.5.3 Psychological Safety and Perceived Workplace Inclusion

Fostering an affirming workplace that nurtures a diverse workforce is one way to increase positive employee behaviors and decrease occurrence of negative behaviors. Past studies also confirm this notion that diversity in workforce has been shown to have beneficial results when it is harnessed into workplace inclusion (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Shore et al., 2011). The optimal distinctiveness theory provides additional insight on a crucial aspect of encouraging inclusion in organizations. The theory formulated that employees seek acceptance not simply for their shared features with others around them but also for their own individual qualities (Brewer, 1991; Greenberg et al., 2007; Mor Barak et al., 2016). In turn, acceptance and inclusion can enhance how employees feel about their jobs (Acquavita et al.,

2009). In a study conducted on 213 employees in United States, Brimhall and Mor Barak, (2018) concluded that workplace inclusion and care for employees leads to innovation.

Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) stated that employee inclusion at workplace represents their psychological satisfaction with the organization and their positive working experience. Self-determination theory also proposed that together with competence and autonomy, relatedness or connectedness with organization is one of the three psychological needs essential for motivation and job satisfaction of employees (Miles, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Since workplace inclusion can be encouraged by identification and psychological connection with the organization, which makes people less willing to leave the organization, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) and Aneesya and Avnish (2020) concluded in their study that employee sense of inclusion in the organization reduce their turnover intentions. According to Kirk-Brown and Van Dijk (2016), hostile working relationships and failures can make employees feel more vulnerable and make them more likely to want to quit the company, which are detrimental for workplace inclusion. On the other hand, Grote (2015) claimed that when coworkers experience greater psychological safety, they are more likely to view failure as an opportunity for learning, which reduces negative emotions and lowers inclinations to leave their jobs. Additionally, psychological safety improves teamwork, and a perception of inclusion can inspire workers to go above and beyond what is expected of them (Dyer et al., 2013)

According to signaling theory, organizational actions signal inclusion or exclusion of employees which results into profound psychological outcomes (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Greenaway & Turetsky, 2020). Through an in-depth review of literature on workplace inclusion, Shore et al. (2011) provide evidences that when employees feel inclusion at workplace, organizational commitment, creativity, well-being, innovation, psychological satisfaction and trust improves. Aspects of psychological safety like information sharing and having a voice in the organization have also been linked to perceptions of inclusion (Shore et al., 2011). A study conducted by Workman-Stark (2021) identified that employees are more likely to feel safe psychologically at their workplace when they were treated fairly, which in turn linked to feelings of inclusion. As a result, it is logical to assume that employees who experience greater psychological safety at work will likely feel more included as a result of their increased ability to express issues and seek advice from others (Chernoglazova, 2022). An organization signals expectations for growth, change behaviors, and support employees in moving forward to produce improved competencies and outcomes by fostering a

psychologically safe workplace (Carmeli et al., 2014). Psychological safety also generates positive outcomes so it is assumed that psychological safety in organization is a signal of valuing employees and the way signals are interpreted will enhance employees perceive workplace inclusion which is in line with signaling theory. Therefore, present study hypothesizes that:

H3. Psychological safety has a positive effect on perceived workplace inclusion.

2.5.4 Mediating Role of Psychological Safety

The importance of ensuring legal compliance in HRM operations, such as ensuring equal employment opportunities, minimum wages, flexible work hours, the prohibition of child labor, and the development of an environment at work that takes into account the advantages of a diverse workforce, is escalating for organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Kossek & Pichler, 2009). Employees have a positive perception of an organizational climate that values diverse employees when the organization's policies and practices are fair and free from discrimination (Aneesya & Avnish, 2020; Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002). The findings of past studies point to a number of critical preconditions for an inclusive workplace, among which perceptions of fairness, and job security are the most important antecedents (Aneesya & Avnish, 2020; Pelled et al., 1999). Having a strong sense of psychological safety may motivate employees to take part and behave as active agents by having the freedom to engage in rewarding and meaningful experiences in the organization (Wanless, 2016).

Lee (2021) stated that psychological safety represents how employees perceive their work environment. However, it does not indicate a situation devoid of issues; rather, it suggests a setting where people can strive to achieve shared objectives without being concerned about potential negative effects while they do so (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Cave et al. (2016) pinned down that legal requirements can enable organizations to establish and maintain a psychologically secure workplace. Employees perceive workplace inclusion when they are treated lawfully and with respect (Cremer & Tyler, 2005) and are confident to perform their jobs without any negative consequences or repercussions (Kahn, 1990) because they feel valued and included as integral members of the organization (Workman-Stark, 2021). In addition, Tyler and Blader (2000) contended that pride in an affiliation with a socially

responsible organization can help people feel more confident as they feel valued and respected in the organization.

Drawing on signaling theory through regular interactions with employees, organizations convey their role for ensuring fairness and legal compliance (Jackson & Schuler, 2006). Fair treatment of employees and respect for individual existence are often made possible and encouraged by work environment that promotes equal opportunity policies (Janssens & Patrizia, 2007). When an employee believes that his or her employment is secure because of the fair policies and practices, the employee feels psychologically safe in the organization. A worker who senses psychological safety in the workplace is more likely to believe that the company values and cares about him or her, leading to perception of inclusive workplace (Shore et al., 2017). Therefore, on the basis of literature and signaling theory it is assumed that legal compliance HRM practices convey signals of psychological safety among employees and when employees have feelings of safety at their workplace, they perceive workplace inclusion. It is hypothesized;

H4. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.

Mor Barak et al. (2016) stated that employee perceptions of the organizational setting that promote acceptance of all employees and offer an atmosphere in which the wide variety of employees' capabilities are harnessed define the environment for inclusion at work. Workplace inclusion is determined by a person's perception of belonging to the organizational setting (Innstrand & Grødal, 2021). People from all backgrounds, not just those who belong to historically dominant identity groups are treated fairly, respected for who they are and included in key decision making in inclusive workplaces (Nishii, 2013). Workplace inclusion is about giving individuals of all groups a voice to express their thoughts on organizational practices and valuing such practices in a way that fosters a feeling of involvement in pursuit of the corporate objective as the goal. According to Lirio et al. (2008), an employee develops a conviction in inclusion as a result of the organization's ongoing efforts. For instilling perception of workplace inclusion among employees there is a need of psychologically safe environment (Chen & Tang, 2018; Fujimoto et al., 2014). Psychological safety is the confidence provided by organization that one should be open and honest about oneself in the workplace matters without worrying about how it would affect one's reputation, standing, or career (Kahn, 1990).

Organizations with employee-oriented HRM practices show empathy for the needs and feelings of their employees by providing them with constructive feedback that not only helps them develop new abilities but also encourages them to speak out without fear of retribution (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Barnard and Roger (2000) in their study stated that organizations practicing internal stakeholders focused HRM strategies provide their staff with many opportunities and strong support to advance their careers over the long term within the company. Employees who experience high psychological safety in the workplace report feeling supported and respected (Chen et al., 2014) as well as having more freedom to express themselves (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Fujimoto and Presbitero (2022) claimed in their study that when subordinates openly voice their viewpoints, organizational policies that encourage inclusive decision making, unbiased relationships and equal employment opportunity practices (i.e., psychological environment of inclusion) will foster a sense of belonging and distinctiveness. Employees are more likely to feel that the organization has similar values to their own and feel high levels of organizational attachment when they have positive perceptions that the business is serving their needs as well as those of their coworkers through employee focused HRM practices (Carmeli et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2015).

Signaling theory formulated that HR system of a company may be utilized as a medium for management to transmit information (Guest et al., 2021). Employees' perceptions are subsequently influenced by the information HR management conveys (Meier-Barthold et al., 2022). Companies may also send forth signals to present and potential employees (Karasek & Bryant, 2012). According to McNall (2009), the organization's evident human resources practices may be viewed as a reflection of less transparent attributes like concern and care for its employees. The support and care reflected through organizational practices foster psychological safety among employees (Frazier et al., 2017). Organization, when respects the right of freedom of speech signals that it is open to employee's points of view, will provide employees with safety and security (Miao et al., 2020) and a perception of an inclusive workplace (Shore et al., 2017). In light of existing literature and signaling theory, it is anticipated that employee-focused socially responsible HRM practices may contribute to a perception of workplace inclusion through enhancing employees' psychological safety. It is hypothesized;

H5. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.

2.5.5 Moderating Role of Responsible Leadership

Critical researchers have argued that HRM's benefits are restricted to management results and that they come at the expense of employees through intensifying workload (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021). However, Guest et al.(2017) contend that it depends on how HRM procedures are set up, notably whether or not organizations prioritize their employees. Employee-focused HRM strategies and policies prioritize employees by promoting employee participation by giving them opportunity to participate in decision-making, incentivize them for going above and beyond their regular job, and have opportunities to develop the necessary skills (Pe´rotin & Robinson, 2000). Celma et al. (2014) stated that employees must be treated with respect and dignity since they are a valuable human resource and the intentions of organization should be to adopt a leadership approach to foster confidence and trust among all parties. Maak (2007) and Voegtlin et al. (2020) contended that a responsible leader cultivates respect and trust among stakeholders, cares about his employee, makes efforts to meet all of their demands which in turn promotes trustworthy corporate environments. Javed et al. (2020) states that when employees work with a responsible leader, a positive impression of the leader is created, which boosts their trust.

At its core, psychological safety is based on the straightforward notion that individuals contribute most effectively when they feel trusted and secure in speaking out for themselves (Aranzamendez et al., 2015). Mayfield and Mayfield (2021) in their study stated that employees will refrain from expressing novel ideas if they anticipate criticism in doing so and will refrain from asking for assistance if they believe it would make them appear weak. Additionally, such a setting lessens employee motivation and encourages them to put up only the amount of effort necessary to maintain their position and get remuneration (Newman et al., 2017). In the meta analytical review on psychological safety, Frazier et al. (2017) demonstrated that there are variety of factors that may stimulate the emergence of psychological safety, but leadership is one of the key factor. When the leader gives the subordinate encouragement rather than micromanaging them, they will feel psychologically protected (Obrenovic et al., 2020). According to past literature, a leader's actions help others feel psychologically safe (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

According to Edmondson (2004), the development of psychological safety among employees at work is likely to be facilitated by leaders who are open, accessible, and available.

Responsible leaders establish incentives to promote ethical behaviours, foster responsiveness to stakeholders, and encourage respectful collaboration both inside and outside the firm (Freeman et al., 2004). While stating attributes of responsible leaders in their study, Maak and Pless (2006) pinned down that responsible leaders defend the right to free expression and encourage reporting of moral transgressions. They make sure that employment standards are followed, that working conditions are humane, safe and are free from all kinds of discrimination. They also make sure that all employees receive fair and equal employment opportunities and that their needs for leisure, work-life balance, and meaningful work are met (Maak & Pless, 2006). To put it concisely, employee-oriented HRM practices can be best implemented when there is more responsible leadership in the organization.

Drawing on the notion of signaling theory that leadership and human resources practices are two essential components of a talent management architecture that interact to provide signals to employees (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Tuan, 2018). Based on what they convey and pay attention to, followers take signals from leaders (Johnson, 2001). Leaders who put their workers' needs first and help them succeed at work increase the psychological safety which further enhances employee wellbeing. Therefore, it could possibly be inferred that responsible leaders who priorities the needs of their employees (Akhtar et al., 2021; Voegtlin et al., 2020), strengthen the linkage between employee-focused HRM practices and psychological safety of employees in an organization.

H6. Responsible leadership moderates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. The higher the responsible leadership, stronger will be the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.

Conceptual Framework

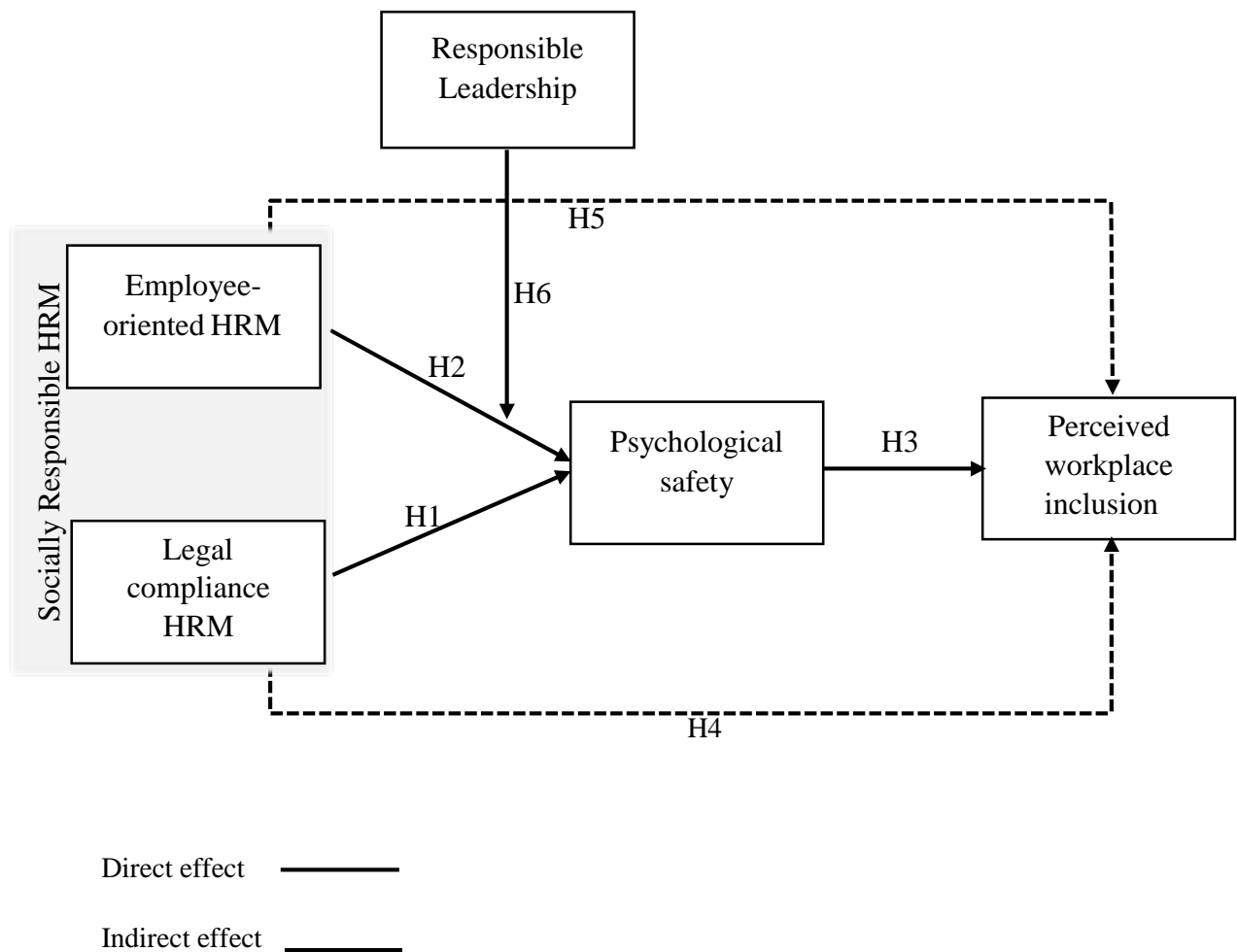


Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework

Chapter Summary

This chapter extensively reviews the literature on socially responsible HRM, psychological safety, responsible leadership, and perceived workplace inclusion. It also highlights the significance of signaling theory in supporting the current study. Additionally, the chapter explains the role of psychological safety as a mediator and responsible leadership as a moderating variable. Based on the literature reviewed and signaling theory, hypotheses have been developed and tested in chapter 4. Furthermore, the chapter presents a conceptual model of the study, illustrating the linkages between constructs.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explain and justify the selected methodological approach and its applicability to the objectives of this study. The chapter begins with a discussion on the significance of research philosophy, which serves as the cornerstone of any research methodology. The comprehensive approach to study design and the justification for choosing it are further explained in the chapter. Lastly, it outlines the techniques and procedures employed for collecting and analyzing the data.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

The belief, the methods, and the resources employed in any given research endeavor all have a role in the importance of the research philosophy since they have an impact on the findings and the knowledge that is produced. The research philosophy is founded on what each researcher personally conceives as valid knowledge, which informs their decision-making process when selecting the best methodology (Alainati, 2015). Research philosophy can be defined as “a development of research assumptions, its knowledge and nature” (Saunders et al., 2019; Žukauskas et al., 2018). Crossan (2003) contends that the nature of the philosophical questions, which in turn reveal the philosophical understanding of the research, determine the research philosophy. The researcher is prompted to consider more deeply the potential contribution to knowledge that is anticipated from the study design as a result of the interaction between research philosophy and research questions (Alainati, 2015). Positivism, interpretivism, postmodernism, critical realism, and pragmatism are the five main research philosophies mentioned in the book by Saunders et al. (2019). The positivism philosophy is determined to be the most appropriate of the five for this study as the aim of the study is to examine the impact of socially responsible HRM on perceived workplace inclusion by testing the existing theory (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019).

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) the philosophical perspective of natural scientists who work with the observable reality within society and produce generalizations is known as

positivism. The early 19th century has seen positivism's inception with the works of French philosopher Auguste Comte. According to Comte, there is a cyclical relationship between theory and observations because they are mutually dependent. Since theories are the result of sound thinking, he argued that they can only be verified through observations (Alakwe, 2017).

Positivism emphasizes the significance of what is presented generally, with a greater focus on taking into account pure data and facts without being impacted by subjective interpretation or judgment (Saunders et al., 2019). Generating explanatory linkages or causal relationships that ultimately result in forecasting and regulating of the phenomenon under consideration is one of the main objectives of studies considering positivism as a philosophical approach (Gergen, 2001). In order to test a priori assumptions that are frequently expressed quantitatively, positivism uses the hypothetic deductive approach, wherein functional links between independent variables and dependent variables can be deduced (Sekaran, 2003). Positivists felt that quantitative approaches, such surveys and experiments, could be used to study social phenomena and could be used to spot patterns and regularities in social behaviour (Saunders et al., 2019). Yet, positivism also came under fire for excluding subjective experience and interpretation from its purview of observable phenomena (Alakwe, 2017). Notwithstanding such objections, positivism nonetheless has a significant impact on the social sciences and management studies and is a widely used framework for knowledge and research work (Blackwood, 2015; Iqbal, 2015; Muraga, 2015).

3.2.2 Quantitative Research

In order to produce descriptive findings, this study has used a quantitative research design. Particularly when combined with planned and organized data collection techniques and methods, quantitative research designs are typically connected to positivism (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Cohen et al (2007), quantitative research is a social science that makes use of empirical techniques and statements. Empirical statements are descriptions of what really happens in the world, as opposed to what ought to happen. Usually, numbers are used to convey these statements. Besides that, Creswell (2014, p. 4) provided a succinct definition of quantitative research as a field of study that explains events by gathering numerical data that are evaluated using mathematically based approaches. The deductive method is frequently linked to quantitative research, where facts are gathered and analyzed to validate theories (Saunders et al., 2019).

Current study is quantitative in nature thus it is critical to comprehend the merits and demerits of this approach. Although, there are several limitations with quantitative research approach. It doesn't offer detailed, in-depth knowledge about a certain phenomenon and cannot adequately convey the intricacy of a specific scenario (Safi, 2021). Yet, the ability to draw conclusions about larger groups of individuals that would be too expensive to investigate using smaller groups of people is one of the key benefits of quantitative approaches (Bartlett et al., 2001). It employs the deductive method to record hypothesized correlations between variables (Safi, 2021). Testing hypotheses is a useful tool for scientific observation, when the goal is to gather the known rather than discover the unknown (Kuhn, 1962; Safi, 2021). The quantitative research approach is predicated on the ability to create and replicate results, test hypotheses deductively and incorporate bias precautions (Creswell, 2014). The focus of current study is on measurable relationships rather than opinions or characteristics, hence a quantitative technique is adopted. This approach produce objective data that is thoroughly explained by employing statistics. Quantitative research approach is widely used by past studies and survey research stand out against other types of quantitative research approach as per the literature review conducted by Queirós et al. in (2017).

3.2.3 Survey Research

Check and Schutt, (2012, p. 160) defined survey research as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions". Survey research has been used extensively in Human Resource Management literature (e.g Alfes et al., 2013; Han et al., 2019; Hays & Hill, 2001; Jan et al., 2021; Mayowa-Adebara & Opeke, 2019; Mehmood et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2015; Pawirosumarto et al., 2017; Putterill & Rohrer, 1995; Rawshdeh et al., 2019). The survey research approach is frequently linked to a deductive research methodology. By examining the sample of the population, survey can quantify or numerically describe the trends, attitudes, or opinions of the population (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, authors asserted that surveys allow researchers to gauge respondents' perspectives through a variety of questions in order to provide their opinion for a measurement scale (Al-Emran et al., 2019).

Current study has examines the effect of socially responsible HRM on employee perceived workplace inclusion by using Questionnaire-based survey because surveys make it convenient to gather uniform data from many respondents, simplify comparisons (Saunders et al., 2019), and facilitate investigation into variables that are inherently unpredictable (Jain, 2015).

Neuman (2013) contends that the most accurate, trustworthy, and valid data may be obtained through surveys provided they are carried out with diligence and consideration. In addition, according to Bryman (2012), the survey questionnaire is a useful tactic that makes use of statistics to unearth patterns that support the research's analytical component. In light of these arguments, the survey questionnaire approach of quantitative method is opted for current study.

3.3 Contextual Analysis

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) are increasingly recognized as critical components of a healthy workplace environment. The value placed on diversity and inclusiveness today is one of the biggest transformations in business culture. Not only is this taking place on a worldwide scale, but organizations have also begun to prioritize this in Pakistan (Laiba, 2021). The process of globalization can lead to changes in the composition of the workforce, as the integration of people from various countries brings in diversity not only in terms of religions, cultures, and ethnicities, but also in thoughts, values, attitudes, behavioral styles, and norms. In light of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor agreement, many Chinese migrants are entering Pakistan, bringing with them religious and cultural diversity (Rajput & McKinney, 2020). Differences in the organization due to age, gender, culture, disabilities, race, and religion have been brought on by such a diversified workforce (Javaid, 2018).

In Pakistan, organizations are gradually realizing the importance of creating a work environment that values diversity and inclusivity, ensuring fair and equal opportunities for all employees while promoting respect and tolerance (Accountability lab, 2022). However, there are still numerous obstacles to surmount since diversity and inclusion issues in Pakistan are multifaceted and ingrained in cultural, religious, and social customs (Accountability lab, 2022).

Gender inequality stands out as a major diversity and inclusion issue in Pakistan (Rajput & McKinney, 2020). Despite comprising nearly half of the population, women face marginalization and discrimination in the workplace. Various discriminatory practices, including unequal pay, inadequate promotion opportunities, and sexual harassment, often drive women out of their jobs. Furthermore, women encounter obstacles when attempting to enter the workforce, such as restricted access to education and childcare, as well as cultural pressures that prioritize conventional gender roles (Rajput & McKinney, 2020).

Currently, there are about 2 million people with disabilities in Pakistan, and it is expected that by 2024, 5% of the population will have a disability (Accountability lab, 2022). Despite a

growing population of people with disabilities, there is still little understanding and appreciation of disability diversity in the workplace. The Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981, requires a hiring quota for people with disabilities in certain regions in the country but the effectiveness of this, however, is not backed up by any convincing evidence and discrimination against disabled individuals is still widespread (Khan, 2020). However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of disability diversity, and employers are taking steps to create more inclusive work environments. However, there is still much progress to be made before differently-abled Pakistanis feel fully welcomed and valued in the workplace.

Another issue for diversity and inclusion in Pakistan is the prevalence of ethnic and religious discrimination. Pakistan is a diverse country, with multiple ethnic and religious groups. Unfortunately, biases and prejudices based on ethnicity and religion are common in the workplaces (Awan, 2021).. Employees from minority groups often face discrimination in hiring, promotion, and access to training and development opportunities. According to a survey conducted by Health and Rural Development Organization (HARD), Balochistan, the overwhelming majority of respondents, i.e. 95%, believed that individuals from minority groups face challenges in securing employment opportunities (Awan, 2021).

In recent years, some organizations in Pakistan have made efforts to address these issues and promote diversity and inclusion. For example, few companies have implemented diversity and inclusion training programs and established employee resource groups to support underrepresented groups (Hasan, 2021). However, these efforts are still limited in scope and have not been adopted widely across the country.

Workforce is becoming more flexible and adaptive in the banking industry due to globalization, with various factors like innovations, advancements, demographics and immigration (Iqbal et al., 2019). Pakistan's banking industry makes up a larger portion of the services sector's GDP contribution. This significant service sector depends heavily on its pool of motivated, active, task-focused, and enthusiastic people. The 1962 Banking Companies Ordinance gives the Central bank i.e. State Bank of Pakistan authority to oversee and control these financial entities. The banking system of Pakistan went through a number of stages during the past 50 years, including nationalization in the 1970s and privatization in the 1990s (Azeem et al., 2015). The banking sector constituted around 32 banks, of which 5 were Public Sector Banks, 20 Private

Banks, 4 Foreign Banks and 3 specialized banks with around more than 16000 branches (SBP, 2023).

Nowadays, organizations in Pakistan are taking initiatives in order to make workplaces more diverse and inclusive and banking sector is not an exception. The banking sector of Pakistan has been making efforts towards promoting diversity and inclusion in recent years. The State Bank of Pakistan has issued policies and directives to encourage financial inclusion for certain groups including women, minorities and individuals with disabilities, and has also implemented diversity and inclusion initiatives for its own workforce. For instance, the banking sector in Pakistan has had low levels of gender diversity until 2021 as women only constitute 1% of branchless banking representatives and 13% of all bank workers (Zaidi, 2021). Nevertheless, the State Bank of Pakistan has recently directed banks to employ a minimum of 20% female workers and increase the percentage of women in branchless banking by 10% to promote diversity and inclusivity in the workplace (Iqbal, 2022). Moreover, The State Bank of Pakistan issues policies to promote financial inclusion for individuals with disabilities, which includes directives for banks to employ a specific number of differently-abled individuals and ensure they are provided with appropriate working conditions (SBP, 2021). Women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership positions, and there is a lack of policies and programs to support their career development. Also, people with disabilities face barriers in accessing employment opportunities despite the SBP's efforts to promote their inclusion in the banking sector.

Inclusion and diversity are mutually exclusive. It serves little purpose to hire a diverse staff if those recruited do not feel included and embraced by the company. For employees working in the organizations, employee-friendly practices are required to be implemented. Compared to other financial institutions, the banking sector has a higher level of social interactions, hence banks are required to be socially responsible (Ali et al., 2022). So in order to examine if there is any role of socially responsible HRM in fostering perceived workplace inclusion, the employees working in banking sector are deemed suitable for this study. According to Omidi and Zotto (2022), most of the previous research on socially responsible HRM have been predominantly conducted on developed countries and there is a need to study the construct in developing countries. This study responds to this call by conducting research on the banking sector of Pakistan.

3.4 Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Target Population

The population refers to the entire collection of situations or elements from which a sample is drawn and the target population is manageable subset of population (Saunders et al., 2019). During a research study, there may be many potential respondents available for participation. However, due to resource and time limitations, it is not feasible to collect data from every single individual. Therefore, it is preferable to select a sample from the population that accurately represents the entire group (Saunders et al., 2019). This helps to ensure that the research findings are applicable and generalizable to the larger population. For the purpose of this study the target population is employees working in banking sector of Pakistan.

Banking sector is targeted due to the fact that organizations in this industry believes that their management emphasis has been concentrated on the need to continually invest in people by giving their workers more control. In terms of the distinctive qualities that each person provides to the business, as represented in varied educational and professional backgrounds, cultural, and gender views, banks trying to support diversity and cultivate an inclusive atmosphere (Zaidi, 2021). As the aim of the study is to examine the impact of socially responsible HRM on perceived workplace inclusion of employees, the banking sector has been chosen in order to assess the role of HR practices toward fostering a sense of inclusion among employees in the organization.

3.4.2 Unit of Analysis

The primary focus of a data collection is the unit of analysis. It is defined as "the level at which data are used to represent one data point in an analysis" (Silverman & Solmon, 1998, p. 272). The choice of the unit of analysis is determined by a number of elements, including the, the researcher's emphasis, research study's phenomena, the target audience for the research, and the study participants (Safi, 2021). Unit of analysis depicts the degree to which acquired data is explicitly focused on one or more elements (Safi, 2021). Organizations, departments, activities, events, groups, area, social artifacts and individuals are examples of these elements (Kumar, 2018). These elements fall within the three categories of micro, meso, and macro levels of study in the social science research.

An individual in a social situation is considered at the micro level analysis, an organization is considered at the meso level, and society, country or a region are considered at the macro level analysis (Ludger, 2007). Matusov (2007) believes that the unit of analysis should be particular to the research study. Kumar (2018) mentioned that in business and management research, there are almost unlimited types of possible units of analysis; but the most prevalent unit of analysis is the individual level analysis. When contrasted to analytical settings at the group or organizational levels, individual level analysis makes it simpler to generalize about the issue. Also, researchers believe that employees may make more sense as a source for information on HRM practices if the goal is to learn about the actual practices implemented in the organization (Gerhart et al., 2000). The individual level analysis has been adopted for this study as the primary objective is to examine the effect of socially responsible HRM practices and other factors on employee's perceptions of workplace inclusion in banking sector of Pakistan.

3.4.3 Purposive Sampling

Calder et al. (1981) have argued that representativeness is not suitable for rigorous theory testing in research. Hence, researchers believe that a non-probability sample is considered more appropriate when the aim is to test the proposed theoretical assumptions (Hulland et al., 2018; Memon et al., 2020). Based on these arguments, current study used a non-probability purposive and snowball sampling techniques as the aim of the study is to test the hypothesis developed on the theoretical assumptions of signaling theory. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, is a non-random sampling technique commonly employed in research studies. Purposive sampling is mostly associated with qualitative research work however, it has widely used in quantitative studies as well (e.g. Awan & Jehanzeb, 2022; Nyathi & Kekwaletswe, 2023; Oyeniyi et al., 2014; Sultana & Johari, 2023). Purposive sampling involves selecting specific participants intentionally based on some predetermined criteria that align with the research objectives (Saunders et al., 2019).

Primary objective of purposive sampling is to carefully select individuals based on certain criteria predetermined by researcher such as capacity to participate in research study, characteristics, knowledge, or personal experiences that are pertinent to the research work (Rai & Thapa, 2015). This strategy enables researchers to focus on people or organisations that can offer insightful opinions or advance knowledge of a certain phenomenon or research topic (Etikan et al., 2015). Furthermore, because participants are selected based on preset criteria,

purposive sampling enhanced the validity and relevance of the findings (Tongco, 2007). At first, current study has used purposive sampling in order to select participant from banking sector on the basis of some specific characteristics which serves as inclusion criteria for participants of current studies. This criteria includes participants who are; currently working in banking sector of Pakistan, permanent employees; having at least bachelor's degree and have more than 1 year of working experience with current organization.

3.4.4 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling technique is refer to “a small pool of initial participant's to select, with the help of their social networks, other participants who meet up the eligibility criteria and can potentially take part to a specific study” (Ejaz & Akbar, 2015, p. 29). In non-probability snowball sampling, participants are chosen based on recommendations from other participants (Panneerselvam, 2014). A small initial set of volunteers, referred to as "seeds," are chosen for snowball sampling based on their applicability to the study and requested to recommend their peers or any other subjects they are aware of who meet the requirements for the study (Raifman et al., 2022). Hence, like a snowball expanding in size as it slides down a hill, the sample enlarges with the continuation of this process as long as the necessary sample size is not attained (Etikan et al., 2015).

Although including members from each group and accessing distant or marginalized populations is challenging, snowball sampling is effective when various populations need to be investigated (Sadler et al., 2010). Another advantage of snowball sampling technique is in terms of time and cost because gathering participants in proportion to the target population is frequently more effective and less expensive than with standard techniques for approaching participants (Panneerselvam, 2014). In Past, snowball technique has been used extensively by researchers. Quantitative researches in HRM field have also extensively used snowball sampling (Gkorezis & Kastritsi, 2017; Ongaki, 2019; Thorsteinsson et al., 2014; Tran et al., 2021; Yi et al., 2017; Yung Chou & Pearson, 2012). Hence, after using purposive sampling for selecting participants for this study, access to a wide network of employees working in the banks across the country who are spread geographically and challenging to contact due to time constraints is made possible by snowball sampling.

3.4.5 Sample Size

Selecting the right sample size is the critical step in the research process. Sample size refers to “the number of respondents or observations to be included in a study” (Memon et al., 2020, p. 2). A suitable and adequate sample size is necessary for the study due to its effect on the validity and effectiveness of the research (Bartlett et al., 2001). Memon et al. (2020) have discussed an array of rules or guidelines for determining sample size such as sample-to-item ratio, sample-to-variable ratio, Krejcie and Morgan’s table, A-priori sample size for structural equation models etc. For the analysis of structural equation models, Kline (2005) provided some guidelines for sample sizes. He claimed that a sample size of 100 is deemed small, a sample size of 100 to 200 is considered as medium, and a sample size of 200 or more is considered large. Since SEM techniques of SmartPLS 4.0 is employed to conduct the analysis in the current study, the sample size is determined in accordance with Kline's (2005) suggestions. This study includes a total of 270 participants as a final sample size.

3.5 Data Collection Method

3.5.1 Questionnaire Design

Before a possible relationship between the variables of the study is evaluated, the research instrument serve as a firm foundation for the objective measurement of the respondents' opinions, attitudes and interests (Safi, 2021). In this study, a structured, self-reported questionnaire is utilized to collect data that is built specifically for this thesis. By using the instrument, the developed hypotheses are tested and the research questions are addressed. A questionnaire is used as the primary data gathering tool. Closed-ended questions are included in survey questionnaire due to the fact that such questions are typically preferred in sizable surveys. By using a Likert scale, respondents are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with a set of statements regarding a topic. Respondents have to select the answer from the available options that best represents their viewpoint by using the Likert scale.

Participants are debriefed before data collection about the instructions to complete the survey. The questionnaire is broken down into three main sections while taking into account the variables, research questions, and aims of this study. The first section is based on the cover letter that is attached to the survey and gives participants a brief overview of the study; the

second section is about the demographic data; and the last section deals with the study's variables and includes closed-ended questions. In current study four constructs are measured in survey questionnaire. Socially responsible HRM is independent variable which includes practices of legal compliance HRM and employee oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion is dependent variable. Psychological safety is a mediator and responsible leadership is a moderator in this study. All of the 25- items are measured using a 5-point, Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). Questionnaire used in this study is attached in Appendix.

3.5.2 Measures

Socially responsible HRM is measured by using 10-item scale developed by Shen and Jiuhua Zhu (2011). Legal compliance HRM is measured with 6 items and employee-oriented HRM is measured with 4 items. Socially responsible HRM defined as “HRM practices aimed at improving employee socially responsible capabilities, motivations and opportunities, often with humanitarian objectives and benefits” (He et al., 2020, p. 347). Legal compliance HRM is defined as “adoption of policies and practices that ensure firms are compliant with legislation on equal employment opportunity, health and safety, working hours, minimum wage and the use of child labour and forced labour” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442). Employee-oriented HRM is defined as “HRM practices addresses employees’ personal and family needs and so goes beyond what is required by law” (Newman et al., 2016, p. 442). The socially responsible HRM scale has a reliability of 0.83.

Responsible leadership is measured with 5-item scale developed by Voegtlin (2011) and adapted from Freire and Gonçalves (2021). Responsible leadership refers to “an orientation or mind-set taken by people in executive level positions toward meeting the needs of a firm’s stakeholder(s). As such, it deals with defining those stakeholder(s), assessing the legitimacy of their claims, and determining how those needs, expectations, or interests can and should best be served” (Waldman et al., 2020, p. 5). Sample item includes “My supervisor demonstrates awareness of the relevant stakeholder claim”. Responsible leadership scale has reliability of 0.94.

Psychological safety is measured by using 7-item scale adapted from Akan et al. (2020) and originally developed by Edmondson (1999). Psychological safety is defined as "the belief that

the work environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmondson, 2018, p. 8). In past the scale have also been used for studying individual level psychological safety of employees (Alkan, 2015; Jiang et al., 2019; Kuo et al., 2019). Sample item includes "Members of this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues". 0.86 is the reliability for the scale of psychological safety.

Perceived workplace inclusion is measured with 3-item scale adopted by Chen and Tang (2018) which is originally developed by Pearce and Randel (2004). Perceived workplace inclusion is defined as "the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, workgroup involvement, and ability to influence the decision making process" (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998, p. 48). Sample item includes "I feel like an accepted part of this organization". Perceived workplace inclusion scale has a reliability of 0.72.

3.5.3 Instrument Validation and Language

Reliability is the major criteria used in selecting the scales for the quantitative analysis (Safi, 2021). The instruments used in this study are based on previously tested instruments with reliability higher than the threshold of 0.07. By measurement model analysis in PLS, the validity of the instruments has been statistically evaluated. Besides that, an expert's opinion have been taken and he suggested that few items needs to be clearer in terms of language in order to improve respondent comprehension of items. His insightful recommendations are incorporated while designing the instrument. Pakistan is linguistically diverse country. Individuals are geographically dispersed and speak multiple languages. Throughout the state's organizations, English plays a pivotal role as a formal medium of communication. Therefore, English language is opted for the questionnaire and try to make ensure that the study's respondents would be able to understand the questionnaires through pretesting.

3.5.4 Pretesting

Pre-testing of survey questionnaires is essential to ensure that there are no ambiguities and that respondents can interpret the questions as intended (Memon et al., 2020; Sekaran, 2003). Pretesting entails using a small sample of responders to evaluate the relevance and comprehension of the questions. The goal is to make sure that the questions being posed

appropriately reflect the data the researcher seeks and that the responder is able to answer them (Grimm, 2010). This helps to eliminate biases by addressing any shortcomings before the instrument is given to the respondents (Sekaran, 2003). Pretesting can enhance the reliability of the study's findings and boost confidence in the results. Pretesting is a crucial stage in research since it can significantly verify the reliability and validity of the data (Sekaran, 2003). A pretesting is conducted on a small group of 5 employees before commencing with the actual data collection process. The aim of the pretest test is to confirm that the survey questions are comprehensible to the respondents and to identify any problems they encountered while completing the questionnaire. After the pretest is completed, a few recommendations are made by respondents regarding certain items in order to make them more comprehensible which are inculcated in the questionnaire.

3.5.5 Time Horizon

The time span for the research study is termed as the time horizon. The two different kinds of time horizons are longitudinal and cross-sectional. Studies that are repeated over a long time are called longitudinal studies. In cross-sectional research, data from respondents is collected at a single point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Cross-sectional studies are convenient to conduct, only need to be done once and have short duration. Given that the scope of this research is confined to a particular span of time, the cross-sectional time horizon is more appropriate (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.5.6 Data Collection and Questionnaire Administration

To ensure an efficient data collection process, various banks were contacted as part of this study. Twenty (20) banks, comprising both public and private sector banks, were chosen for the current study. Out of those, main branches and head offices of 11 banks were contacted for face-to-face data collection. Additionally, because of the geographically dispersed target population of this study, an online survey was also created to approach the maximum number of employees working in multiple cities all over Pakistan including Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, Multan Peshawar, Faisalabad and other cities to lower social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The data collection for this study takes place in two phases because the primary purpose was to increase the response rate. Initially, due to financial year end closings at banks, face-to-face data collection was not permitted. Instead, bank representatives requested to send them an online survey questionnaire. In first phase, only 131 samples were collected through online mode of data collection. The response rate was not appreciable, prompting the need for second round of data collection which have been conducted face-to-face and managed to collect 144 samples, leading to a total sample of 287.

In the first phase of data collection, which took place in December 2022, a sample of 131 respondents was gathered over the course of 20 days. Data was collected using an online survey questionnaire and a cover letter that provides respondents with a brief explanation of the study's objectives as well as the survey's fill-in instructions. Data gathering through online surveys was quite difficult since bank employees had incredibly hectic schedules. Employees were busy due to the banks' financial year-end closings. Because they willingly agreed to participate in data collection, participants requested that reminders be sent to them so they could spare the time to fill out the survey.

The second phase of data collection was conducted face-to-face in order to improve response rate during January and February 2023. Data collection took place in Islamabad due to large number of banks in the locality which can be visited. Total time for the FTF data collection was 22 days. As bank employees typically work 9 am to 5 pm during which they must serve to their customers, they scarcely find time to fill out the survey. The bank representatives requested to distribute questionnaire to their employees so that the employees would fill out the questionnaire at their ease. During the second round, a total of 150 questionnaires were circulated, and 144 of them were reverted. Online data collection was also underway at the same time, and a few more employees were contacted. In the second round, additional 12 samples from employees of banks in various locations around the country were acquired. Till the end of second wave, a total sample of 287 have been collected from both face-to-face (n=144) and online data collection approaches (n=143).

Table 3.1. Data collection information

Mode	Outcome
Online data collection	<p>Responses = 143</p> <p>Location: Main branches in multiple cities mainly including Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Peshawar and few other cities.</p> <p>Number of contacted banks = 9</p> <p>Time period= 20 days</p>
Face to face data collection	<p>Responses= 144</p> <p>Location: main branches/ head offices in Islamabad</p> <p>Number of contacted banks = 11</p> <p>Time period= 22 days</p>

A small number of samples out of 287 are excluded during the initial screening because they didn't fall into the scope of the current study. These included survey respondents who completed the questionnaire inaccurately, such as with straight lines or dubious demographic information (n = 9), who are not permanent employees of the organization, such as interns and those who have work experience of less than 1 year with current organization. (n = 8). This left a final sample size of 270 for final data analysis.

3.6 Common Method Bias

There is always a possibility of common technique bias when measuring the dependent and independent variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For mitigating the effect of bias, both procedural and statistical methods have been conducted. At procedural level, in order to lessen the likelihood of common method bias, initially all the variables are measured simultaneously. Furthermore, standardized items are utilized to measure all constructs of the conceptual model to account for subjectivity inherent in social constructs. Moreover, the reliability and validity of each variable's scale are carefully identified and considered on the basis of existing literature. Also, pretests are undertaken before the questionnaire is actually used to gather data from the employees. Lastly, At statistical level, Harman's Single Factor technique have been used after data collection to identify any common method bias (Harman, 1967; Memon et al., 2020).

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations are guidelines, rules and codes related to research ethics. Ethical considerations are of utmost importance in research studies despite of the research approach being utilized. As quantitative research work entails the collection, analysis, and interpretation of numerical data, ethical concerns should be dealt cautiously. Ethical concerns guarantee that research is conducted in a way that ensure participant rights and dignity, upholds scientific integrity, and maintains the trust of the community as a whole (World Health Organization, 2020). During data collection process and the entirety of the current study, the ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, ethical language and data storage are given paramount importance.

Informed consent is vital principle of research ethics. In order to comply with the principle of informed consent, researchers must provide participants with enough information and assurances about their participation so they can understand the potential consequences and freely decide whether or not to participate, free from undue pressure or coercion. It is necessary to keep track of informed consent either in documented form or verbally (Saunders et al., 2019). In this study, a brief cover letter is attached with survey questionnaire in which researcher's information, institute identification, purpose of study, the study's design have all be made explicit and understandable to participants which is also recommended by Creswell (2014). This letter is used to provide overview of study to participants.

Participants are permissible and have unquestionable right to abstain to take part in a research study. This is followed by the right not to be forced to participate. The attempt to expand participation beyond what is voluntarily provided is likewise inappropriate. Participants can still exercise their rights to decide how they will participate in the data collection process, including the right to refuse to answer any question or set of questions, to withhold any requested data and possibly withdraw any data they have already provided and to withdraw their participation from the research study entirely (Saunders et al., 2019). Current study also ensure the principle of voluntary participation of employees working in the banking sector. The current study ensures that the participation of all the respondents from the banking sector is entirely voluntary, granted the right to employees to make decision regarding participation in this study and provided with freedom to withdraw at any moment from this study without any explanation.

Anonymity and confidentiality are crucial principles in research ethics. Anonymity protects participants' identities by omitting any information which reveals the identity of participants and reporting findings at an aggregated level. Confidentiality is protecting participants' data and personal information from unauthorized usage or disclosure. Furthermore, results of the study should be presented at a sufficient level of generalization so that identification of both organization and participants is not possible. Additionally, researchers believe that reliability of the data collected can be enhanced by maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Saunders et al., 2019). In current study, all information is held in the strict secrecy, and the final work that results from this research do not contain any information that could be used to identify any specific person or organization. The participant-provided personal data is only accessible to the researcher and the supervisor and only used for current study purpose. At all times, privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed.

Using appropriate and ethical language in a survey questionnaire is crucial for ensuring clarity, understanding and ethical considerations. The language used should be understandable, unbiased, respectful, and free from ambiguity (Creswell, 2014). Current study ensured that the survey questionnaire should not include any sensitive terms that may potentially harm the sentiments of participants. By employing respectful and considerate language, this study has ensured that the statements in survey questionnaires are easily comprehensible, unbiased and free from discriminatory or insensitive language.

Ensuring ethical standards required to secure storage of research data, establish appropriate data retention period, and ensure secure disposal when it is no longer needed. Secure storage prevents unauthorized access, retention periods ensure data is kept only for necessary durations, and secure disposal mitigates potential data breaches and inappropriate usage of data for other studies (Creswell, 2014). Throughout the period of current study, the collected data is kept safe and secure on a laptop with a password. After completion of this study, data will be discarded so that it will not be used inappropriately in the future.

By taking the aforementioned ethical principles of research into account, current study exhibits a strong commitment to safeguarding the rights of research participants and the adherence to ethical considerations of research.

3.8 Data Analysis

For analyzing data of this study, descriptive statistics, measurement model and structural model assessments have been performed. Descriptive statistics aim to clarify the essential attributes of a dataset, providing a concise and comprehensible representation of the data. The primary function of descriptive statistics is to assist researchers in comprehending the data they have collected. A variable's data values can be numerically described and compared using descriptive statistics (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, they present the most relevant aspects of the data in a meaningful manner. Prior to conducting the hypothesis test, SPSS software is used to perform descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation of the demographic data.

All of the constructs or latent variables, as well as the related items or indicators, are tested simultaneously using the measurement model (Safi, 2021). The measurement model is tested to ascertain the internal consistency reliability, convergent validity (CV) and discriminant validity (DV) of the constructs under study. The structural model assessment entails assessing the relationships among the pertinent constructs as indicated by the study's theoretical model (Safi, 2021). The current study's variables have been subjected to hypothesis testing to determine their direct, indirect, and moderating effect.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research methodology used to conduct the research is explained, with a focus on five main components: research design, sampling and population, data collection, data gathering, and data analysis techniques. The study examines the causal relationships through a survey, with employees as the unit of analysis. The chapter also outlines the instrument used for measurement of variables, techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, comprehensive account of the data analysis and key findings of the study are presented. The chapter begins by outlining the descriptive statistics procedures employed through SPSS 24.0, followed by a discussion of the measurement model, which evaluated internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validity using SmartPLS 4.0. The structural model assessment involved testing path coefficients, coefficient of determination, and effect size. Additionally, this chapter tested both direct and indirect hypotheses and conducted a moderation analysis. The results of all analyses are presented in detail.

4.2 Missing Value Analysis

Descriptive statistics for demographic information and missing value analysis are performed in IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0. The results of missing value analysis suggests that it is missing at random, hence it does not affect results in any way.

4.3 Demographic Information

Most of the participants lies in the age bracket of 31-40 years (n= 105) followed by 21-30 (n=101) and 40-50 (45) years. The present study had a total of 270 participants, of which 205 are males and 65 are females. In term of qualification, the banking industry has a highly competent workforce, with the majority of employees possessing a Master's degree (n=166) and followed by those who hold a Bachelor's degree (n=87). Additionally, a small number of participants have earned professional certifications (n=15). In the present study, a majority of the participants are from the middle management level (n=103), holding positions such as accountants, officers, analysts, assistants, etc. This is followed by supervisors/line managers (n=77) and non-managerial staff (n=73).

In terms of work experience with current organization, most of employees falls under the category of 1 to 3 years (n=108) followed by those having experience of above 10 years (n=90).

The rest of the employees have work experience of more than 3 years but less than 10 years (n=72).

Table 4.1. Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	205	76
	Female	65	24
Age	21-30	101	37
	31-40	105	39
	41-50	45	17
	Above 50	19	7
Qualification	Bachelor	87	32
	Master	166	61.5
	PhD	2	1
	Professional Certifications	15	5.5
Experience	1-3 years	108	40.1
	4-6 years	49	18.1
	6-10 years	23	8.5
	Above 10 years	90	33.3

4.4 Multicollinearity

A measurement model exhibits collinearity when two or more of its constructs have a significant degree of correlation (Hair et al., 2021). The variance inflation factor (VIF) is a frequently used measure to assess the degree of collinearity among indicators. A higher VIF value indicates a higher level of collinearity (Saunders et al., 2019). Regarding the VIF value that should be considered as the collinearity threshold, there is a lot of debate in the literature. According to Burns and Burns (2008), a VIF value above 10 is considered as an indication of multicollinearity. However, Hair et al. (2014) suggest a lower cut-off value of 5.0 to detect multicollinearity. According to Diamantopoulos and Sigauw (2006), the VIF scores for each construct should be less than 3.3. The results of VIF for each construct are lower than the cut-off value of 3.3, indicating that collinearity problems between the constructs do not exist in this study.

4.5 Common Method Bias

Survey based studies are prone to common method bias issues (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The term "common method bias" describes the extent to which the measured items are interrelated due to the fact that the data was gathered from a single source (Hair et al., 2014; Memon et al., 2016). In order to avoid this issue at statistical level, The single-factor test proposed by Harman (1967) is performed. The results shows the chance for maximum variance could be 34% indicating that there is no common method bias issue in this study since even a single factor could not account for over 40% of the variance (Babin et al., 2016; Memon et al., 2020).

4.6 Data Analysis and Results

The current study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM expedite the prediction of the dependent variables which is one of the great benefit of using it for analysis (Hair et al., 2017). McDonald (1996) referred PLS-SEM as a "silver bullet" and is regarded as the "most completely developed and general system" by Hair et al. (2011) . The measurement model and the structural model are the two primary parts of PLS-SEM. In essence, the former is referred to as the "outer model," which assesses the associations between the latent construct (i.e., variable or factor) and its salient indicators (i.e., items or measures). The latter pertains to the "inner model," where the connections between the constructs are evaluated (Al-Emran et al., 2019). A two-stage analytical method devised by Andersen and Gerbing (1988) is used in this study. The first stage emphasized on the measurement models, including internal consistency reliability, convergent validity (CV), and discriminant validity (DV), while the second stage, which is a stage for hypothesis testing, assessed the structural model.

4.6.1 Structural Equation Modeling

4.6.1.1 Measurement Model Assessment

4.6.1.1.1 Internal Consistency Reliability

The degree to which indicators assessing the same construct are related to one another is known as internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2021). Composite reliability (CR) is used to test internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). Greater values correspond to better reliability of

construct. In exploratory research, reliability levels between 0.60 and 0.70, for instance, are deemed "acceptable," and reliability values between 0.70 and 0.90 are categorized as "satisfying to good" (Hair et al., 2021). Numbers above 0.90 and over 0.95 pose a challenge because they show that the indicators are repetitive, which lowers construct validity (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). A measurement model is satisfactory for each construct if its CR value is higher than the threshold value of 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Richter et al., 2016). The results shows that each construct's composite reliability is- LCHRM (0.833), EOHRM (0.809), responsible leadership (0.894), psychological safety (0.833), perceived workplace inclusion (0.894) exceeds the cut-off value (0.7), demonstrating the high internal consistency of the measures.

4.6.1.1.2 Convergent Validity

Another measure to examine is convergent validity (CV), which analyze "the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct" (Hair et al., 2017, p. 112). CV is calculated by analyzing the item's outer loading and the average variance extracted (AVE). Hair et al. (2021, p. 78) defined AVE as "the sum of the squared loadings divided by the number of indicators, which is the grand mean value of the squared loadings of the indicators connected with the construct". In general, outer loadings should be 0.708 or higher, and an acceptable AVE score is 0.5 (Avkiran, 2017). An indicator is considered to be highly reflective of the construct when the outer loading is high (Memon et al. 2020). An AVE of 0.50 or higher implies that the construct explains 50% or more of the variation of the indicators that make up the construct (Hair et al., 2021) and indicators with lower factor loadings (0.4-0.7) should be retained if factors with higher loadings can reflect at least 50% of the variance (Hair et al., 2017). The results of CV indicates that all indicators except PS1, PS4 and PWI3 ($CV < 0.4$) have satisfactory loadings. Additionally the results indicate that all the constructs- legal compliance HRM (0.539), employee-oriented HRM (0.522), psychological safety (0.500), responsible leadership (0.628) and perceived workplace inclusion (0.808) had acceptable AVE. This validates the CV of the constructs. Results of internal consistency reliability and CV tests are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Employee-Oriented HRM	EOHRM1	0.653	0.522	0.809
	EOHRM2	0.855		
	EOHRM3	0.538		
	EOHRM4	0.801		
Legal Compliance HRM	LCHRM1	0.712	0.539	0.853
	LCHRM2	0.753		
	LCHRM3	0.704		
	LCHRM5	0.806		
	LCHRM6	0.690		
Psychological Safety	PS2	0.664	0.500	0.833
	PS3	0.667		
	PS5	0.697		
	PS6	0.748		
	PS7	0.753		
Perceived Workplace Inclusion	PWI1	0.906	0.808	0.894
	PWI2	0.892		
Responsible Leadership	RL1	0.776	0.628	0.894
	RL2	0.829		
	RL3	0.788		
	RL4	0.800		
	RL5	0.769		

Note(s): PS1, PS4 and PWI3 is excluded due to weak factor loading.

4.6.1.1.3 Discriminant Validity

In this study, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach is used to confirm the discriminant validity (DV) (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT is the “ratio of the between-trait correlations to the within-trait correlation (Hair et al., 2017, p. 118). Discriminant validity is defined as “the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards” (Hair et al., 2014, p. 104). HTMT values above a certain threshold depicts having issues with discriminant validity. A threshold value of 0.90 is suggested by Henseler et al. (2015) for structural models with constructs that are conceptually quite comparable. However, a lower, more conservative threshold value, such as 0.85 is recommended when conceptions are conceptually different (Henseler et al., 2015). As

indicated in Table 4.3 with a threshold value of 0.85, the HTMT criteria findings demonstrated that the current study does not deviate from the assumptions of discriminating validity. The outcomes of the entire measuring model display appropriate CV, internal consistency, and DV.

Table 4.3: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	EOHRM	LCHRM	PS	PWI	RL
EOHRM					
LCHRM	0.732				
PS	0.666	0.706			
PWI	0.595	0.68	0.799		
RL	0.769	0.692	0.776	0.657	

Note(s): DV is established at HTMT.85 (Henseler et al., 2015)

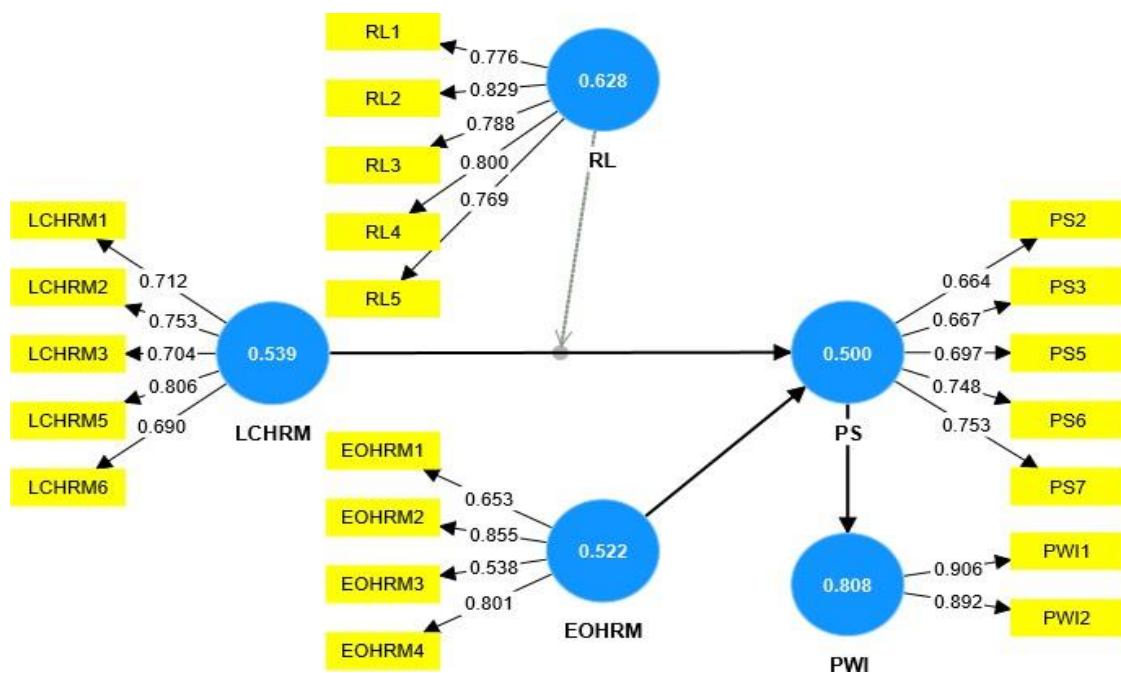


Figure 4.1. Measurement Model

4.6.1.2 Structural Model

The cause and effect connections between the constructs entails verification in order to evaluate the structural model. By examining a number of variables, including path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R^2), and effect size (f^2) the structural model is assessed (Memon et al. 2020). R^2 is a metric used to determine the model's general predictive ability (Hair et al.,

2014). Cohen (1988) suggested that 0.02, 0.13 and 0.26 values of R^2 should be classified as small, medium and large. Results of R^2 shows that the socially responsible HRM of an organization explains 46% of its employee's psychological safety ($R^2 = 0.465$) and 37% of their perceived workplace inclusion ($R^2 = 0.373$), as indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Coefficient of determination (R^2)

Constructs	Coefficient of determination (R^2)
PS	0.465
PWI	0.373

As defined by Hair et al (2014, p. 117) effect size (f^2) is “the change in the R^2 when a specified exogenous construct was omitted from the model which could be used to evaluate whether the omitted construct had a substantive impact on the endogenous variable”. The values of effect size as per the recommendation of Cohen (1988), are 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 respectively, categorized as small, medium, and large effect sizes. The results of f^2 indicates that legal compliance HRM ($f^2 = 0.019$) and employee-oriented HRM ($f^2 = 0.054$) has a small to medium effect on psychological safety, while psychological safety ($f^2 = 0.595$) has a large effect on perceived workplace inclusion. Lastly, responsible leadership ($f^2 = 0.002$) does not have any substantial effect on the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.

4.6.1.2.1 Hypothesis Testing (Direct effect)

To calculate the statistical significance, the bootstrapping method (5,000 subsamples, one-tailed significance) is used. As presented in Table 5, the results indicates that legal compliance HRM (H1, $\beta = 0.141$, $t = 2.203$, $p = 0.014$, CI LL= 0.023, CI UL= 0.235) is significantly positively related with psychological safety of employees. Moreover, Employee-oriented HRM (H2, $\beta = 0.229$, $t = 3.464$, $p = 0.000$, CI LL= 0.117, CI UL= 0.334) is significantly positively related with psychological safety. Moreover, the results indicates that psychological safety (H3, $\beta = 0.611$, $t = 13.395$, $p = 0.000$, CI LL= 0.523, CI UL= 0.675) is significantly positively related to perceived workplace inclusion. Thus, the hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 of current study are supported.

4.6.1.2.2 Hypothesis Testing (Indirect effect)

A mediation analysis is performed to examine (H4) and (H5), which proposed that psychological safety serves as a mediator between socially responsible HRM (e.g., legal compliance HRM, employee-oriented HRM) and perceived workplace inclusion. This study followed Preacher et al.'s (2007, p. 186) definition of mediation effect according to which “an indirect effect or mediation, is said to occur when the causal effect of an independent variable (X) on a dependent variable (Y) is transmitted by a mediator (M)”. The findings for the indirect impact demonstrates that psychological safety (H4, $\beta = 0.14$, $t = 3.293$, $p = 0.001$, CI LL= 0.055, CI UL= 0.222) mediates the relationship between Legal compliance HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion. Also, psychological safety (H5, $\beta = 0.086$, $t = 2.156$, $p = 0.031$, CI LL= 0.002, CI UL= 0.158) mediates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion. All findings of structural model are shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

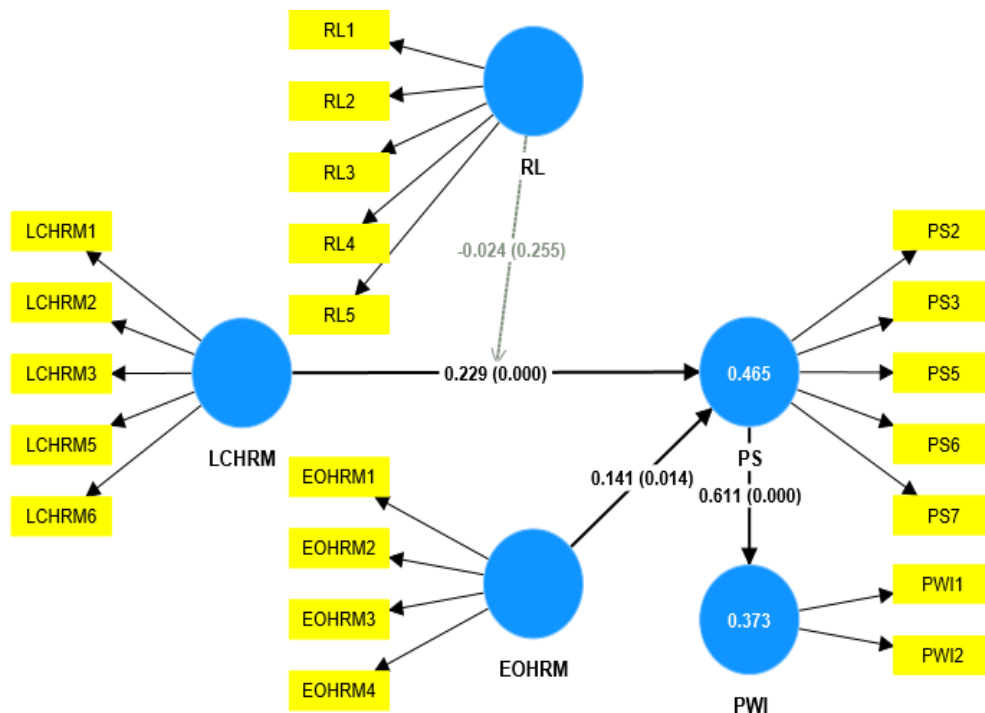


Figure 4.2. Structural model.

Table 4.5. Hypotheses testing (Direct effects)

Hypotheses	Beta	STDEV	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	CILL	CIUL	Decision	<i>f</i> ²
LCHRM -> PS	0.141	0.064	2.203	0.014	0.023	0.235	Supported	0.019
EOHRM -> PS	0.229	0.066	3.464	0.000	0.117	0.334	Supported	0.054
PS -> PWI	0.611	0.046	13.395	0.000	0.523	0.675	Supported	0.595

Note(s) CILL, lower level; CIUL, upper level; STDEV, standard deviation, *p* < 0.001.

Table 4.6. Hypotheses Testing (Indirect Effect)

Hypotheses	Beta	STDEV	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	CI LL	CIUL	Decision
LCHRM -> PS -> PWI	0.14	0.042	3.293	0.001	0.055	0.222	Supported
EOHRM -> PS -> PWI	0.086	0.04	2.156	0.031	0.002	0.158	Supported

Note(s) CILL, lower level; CIUL, upper level; STDEV, standard deviation, *p* < 0.001.

4.6.1.2.3 Moderation Analysis

Bootstrapping is used to determine the significance of the moderating variable in the moderation analysis. One of the objectives of this study is to examine the moderating role of responsible leadership in the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. However, contrary to the study's initial assumption, the results show that the *p*-value (0.255) is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that responsible leadership (H1, $\beta = -0.024$, $t = 0.659$, $p = 0.255$, CI LL = -0.083, CI UL = 0.037) does not moderate the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. Thus, the study's H6 is not supported, and the findings of the moderation analysis are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Moderation analysis

Hypothesis	Beta	STDEV	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	CI LL	CI UL	Decision	<i>f</i> ²
RL x EOHRM -> PS	-0.024	0.037	0.659	0.255	-0.083	0.037	Not Supported	0.002

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the data analysis procedures used in the study and the major findings that emerged. Firstly, descriptive statistics are thoroughly explained. The data is analyzed using structural equation modeling, which involved both measurement and structural models. The results reveals that legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM are significantly and positively related to psychological safety, and psychological safety is positively associated with perceived workplace inclusion. Additionally, the study confirms the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion. Surprisingly, responsible leadership does not found to be a moderating variable in the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings from the current study, with each hypothesis discussed separately in relation to whether it is accepted or rejected, and supported by relevant literature. Furthermore, the chapter delves into both the theoretical and practical implications of the study, highlights its limitations, and provides recommendations for future research work. Ultimately, the chapter concludes with a summary of the key insights extracted from the study.

5.2 Recapping/ Research Highlights

The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of socially responsible HRM practices, encompassing both legal compliance and employee-oriented initiatives, in relation to employees' perception of workplace inclusion. Additionally, the study analyzes the mediating effect of psychological safety and the moderating impact of responsible leadership. Signaling theory is used for providing firm foundation to theoretical model of this study.

The study is quantitative in nature and used survey questionnaire is used in order to collect data from employees working in banking sector of Pakistan. The data analysis has been performed by using SmartPLS 4.0. The findings of the study indicates that socially responsible HRM which comprised of two broad HRM practices i.e. legal compliance HRM and employee oriented HRM have a positive relation with psychological safety of employees. Furthermore, psychological safety has a positive relation with perceived workplace inclusion. The mediating role of psychological safety has also been proved between the relationship of socially responsible HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. However, responsible leadership does not reveal as a moderating variable between employees oriented HRM and psychological safety among employees.

Table 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypotheses		Decision
H1.	Legal compliance HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.	Supported
H2.	Employee-oriented HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.	Supported
H3.	Psychological safety has a positive effect on perceived workplace inclusion.	Supported
H4.	Psychological safety mediates the relationship between legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.	Supported
H5.	Psychological safety mediates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.	Supported
H6.	Responsible leadership moderates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.	Not Supported

5.3 Discussion of Findings

5.3.1 Hypothesis 1. Legal compliance HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.

The aim of this study is to examine the association between socially responsible human resource management practices, including legal compliance and employee-oriented initiatives, and employees' perception of workplace inclusion. The study also examines the mediating role of psychological safety and the moderating effect of responsible leadership. The first hypothesis H1 which proposed that legal compliance HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety of employees is supported with a significant direct relationship between legal compliance HRM and psychological safety. The results of this study indicates that legal compliance HRM can be an effective tool in creating a safe and secure work environment for employees. Authors believes that effective HR strategies can positively influence people's attitude and behaviour (DeNisi & Smith, 2014). When organizations adhere to legal requirements and implement HR practices that fulfill legal obligations, such as providing a minimum wage and ensuring workplace health and safety, employees feel that their rights are protected. This, in turn, fosters a sense of psychological safety among employees, which is critical for their overall job performance. Furthermore, the findings of this study are consistent with a previous study conducted by Shen and Jiuhua Zhu (2011) on Chinese workers. Their research found that employees who perceive their organization compliant with legal regulations

are more committed to their organization. This suggests that employees in the Asian region may respond positively to HR initiatives that prioritize meeting legal requirements.

5.3.2 Hypothesis 2. Employee-oriented HRM have a positive effect on psychological safety.

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that employee-oriented HRM is positively associated with the psychological safety of employees. The results of H2 suggests that employee-oriented HRM has a favorable impact on the psychological safety of employees. Employee-oriented HRM can be demonstrated in various ways by the organizations, including increased workplace flexibility, opportunities for career development, efforts to foster work-life balance, and a commitment to justice. When employees perceive that their needs and those of their colleagues are being met through the implementation of employee-oriented HRM, they are more likely to feel that the organization values and respects them and it give rise to higher levels of psychological safety among them while working in the organization. Previous study by Kundu and Gahlawat (2015), discovered that employee-oriented HRM fosters a safe workplace in which workers feel at ease showing their genuine selves, provide credence to the conclusions of this study. The findings of the current study are also in line with those of the study by Edmondson and Lei (2014), which came to the conclusion that treating employees' personal interests and future career progress appropriately can result in psychological safety in the workplace. Past study also confirmed the findings of H1 and H2 which suggest that appropriate HR practices foster relationships with employees and create psychological safety among them (Frazier et al., 2017).

5.3.3 Hypothesis 3. Psychological safety has a positive effect on perceived workplace inclusion.

The third hypothesis (H3) proposed that psychological safety is positively associated with the perceived workplace inclusion. The results of H3 indicate that psychological safety has a favorable impact on the perceived workplace inclusion among employees. When employees feel psychologically safe at workplace, they find themselves at liberty to communicate their thoughts and opinions as a result employee feel valued and acknowledged for their contributions to the company which enhance the perception of workplace inclusion. Psychological safety at work promotes a supportive, open, and trustworthy working atmosphere that gives employees a strong sense of affiliation with the company and develops a perception of workplace inclusion. The past studies also provide a firm support to current

study's findings which stated that psychological safety can be foster through inclusive work environment (Carmeli et al., 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

5.3.4 Hypothesis 4. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) of current study proposed that psychological safety mediates the relationship between legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. The findings of current study proves the mediating role of psychological safety between the relationship of legal compliance HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. The results indicates that organizations that comply with legal HRM requirements and provide employees with market-competitive and timely compensation, equal employment opportunities, and follow comprehensive health and safety regulations, create an environment where employees feel safe to raise concerns without fear of any negative backlash from management. Such HRM initiatives can help develop psychological safety among employees, which can make them feel more valued and respected, enhance their sense of belonging, and enhance their perception of workplace inclusion. By fulfilling employees' legal rights and safety protocols, organizations can foster a more inclusive work environment that promotes employee well-being.

5.3.5 Hypothesis 5. Psychological safety mediates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) of current study proposed the mediating role of psychological safety between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. The findings have shown that psychological safety plays a significant role in the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. Employee-oriented HRM extends beyond legal requirements to address the needs of employees, including promoting workplace democracy and focusing on their career development. This approach creates an environment where employees feel safe to express themselves, knowing that they have the support of the organization. HR practices like career development training, job flexibility, and employee involvement in decision-making helps in establishing a secure work environment that address uncertainties and fears. When employees perceive their workplace as safe and encouraging, where they are valued and respected, they are more likely to feel included and engaged. The findings of H4 and H5 of current studies are consistent with past studies where psychological

safety have been considered as a mediator between HRM practices and employees outcomes (Agarwal, 2022; J. Xu et al., 2020).

5.3.6. Hypothesis 6. Responsible leadership moderates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) of current study proposed that responsible leadership moderates the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological. The findings have shown the contradictory results against the proposed hypothesis by demonstrating that responsible leadership does not moderate the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. The possible argument for the results could be that socially responsible HRM, specifically employee-oriented HRM practices prioritized employee beyond legal requirements and allow them express their opinions and feelings about the challenges that may arise during their employment in the organization, provide them opportunities to learn the essential skills while rewarding them for going above and beyond their usual jobs.

Furthermore, employee-oriented HRM practices also cater employee's personal and professional developmental needs, so responsible leadership is extraneous. According to Maak (2007) and Voegtlin et al. (2020) who expounded in their study that responsible leader cares about his employee, makes efforts to meet their demands which in turn promotes trustworthy corporate environments. If an organization has adopted employee-oriented HRM practices, it means that the policies and practices of the organization are designed to meet the personal and professional needs of employees. This leads to employees feeling safe and secure in the organization which constrained the need for leadership support to promote psychological safety within the organization. It is the fact that employees pay attention to existing rules and procedures of HR rather than the influence of leadership, and display attitudes and behaviours according to the rules on written sources. The findings of current studies are aligned with the study conducted by Adiguzel et al. (2020) and AlAbri et al. (2022) who concluded in their studies that leadership roles haven't any considerable impact on the employees attitude and behaviour for the procedures and practices of HR.

The current study's findings are in line with signaling theory, which suggests that organizations adopt socially responsible HRM practices and prioritize employee signal to their workers that they are valued and cared for. This, in turn, creates an environment where employees feel psychologically safe to voice their concerns and issues regarding their work or organizational

issues. These organizational activities and practices also provide employees with a sense of respect, which makes them feel valued and increases their sense of belonging to the organization. This increased sense of belonging, in turn, contributes to their perceived workplace inclusion. Therefore, organizations that prioritize socially responsible HRM practices and value their employees are more likely to foster a work environment that enhances employee psychological safety and promotes perceived workplace inclusion.

5.4. Managerial Implications

In today's highly competitive corporate sector, the performance of individuals and their contributions to organizations have become more important than ever. The findings of the present study hold several implications for practitioners within the banking industry. First, the research indicates that both legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM can enhance employees' psychological safety. Banking organizations should prioritize the implementation of employee-oriented HRM practices and pay attention to employee's personal and family needs, as they have demonstrated a stronger influence on employees' psychological safety. This can be possible by fostering a supportive work environment that encourages employees to openly communicate with their managers about their personal and professional issues. Employee involvement in organizational decision-making processes such as seeking employee's input on new policies and initiatives can also make them feel a valuable part of organizational success. Encourage collaboration among employees by having meetings where employees can brainstorm and find solution to problems collectively.

Furthermore, work-life balance of employees can be promoted through flexible work arrangements. Formal laws regulate employee occupational health and safety, imposing legal responsibilities on organizations (Fan et al., 2019). Although in banking sector it is difficult to exercise flexible work arrangements but for making a workplace inclusive, certain initiatives needs to be undertaken. Furthermore, organizations should offer employees training and skill development opportunities. Proper training need analysis (TNA's) should be conducted for determining the needs of different groups. Also prioritize career advancement and devise clear career growth plan for all employees regardless of their personal characteristics. Lastly, employee wellbeing should be prioritized by managers in banking organization. Employee assistance programs such as childcare services to working mothers and legal assistance can be provided to employees who are facing any legal issues. By doing so, banking organizations can

demonstrate organizational commitment and support to which will make employees feel more secure in their job positions and perceive a heightened sense of inclusion within the organization.

Additionally, the study's findings propose that legal compliance HRM plays a significant role in enhancing employees' psychological safety, which can result in an increased perception of workplace inclusion. Organizations within the banking sector must strictly adhere to local labor laws and the standards established by the State Bank of Pakistan, which governs various operational procedures and practices in banks. This adherence may help employees feel safe and secure while working for an organization that fulfills its legal obligations. Managers should be well-informed about equal employment opportunity laws without any discrimination in order to ensure fairness in hiring practices. Another crucial factor in enhancing employees' psychological safety is mitigating workplace violence, including sexual harassment. Banks should develop and stringently enforce a zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence that encompasses all employees, irrespective of their demographic differences.

Moreover, policies established by the State Bank of Pakistan, such as "protection of employees against workplace harassment" and "grievance handling policy," must be rigorously adhered to, ensuring a comfortable and secure working environment for employees. The implementation of these initiatives by HR managers within the banking industry signifies that the organization is legally compliant, valuing and respecting its employees. Consequently, managers seeking to augment feelings of inclusion among organizational members should adopt legal compliance HRM practices, which can also contribute to fostering psychological safety among employees. Lastly, regular feedback and surveys should be conducted in order to find out if employees have any grievance or they feel any sort of discrimination and take corrective actions on the feedback received in order to enhance psychological safety.

The findings of the present study suggest that employees who perceive psychological safety in their workplace tend to view their work environment as more inclusive. This underscores the need for HRM professionals to prioritize employee psychological safety and cultivate an atmosphere where employees feel at ease expressing their concerns to achieve desired outcomes. Beside those interventions that enhance psychological safety among employees, bank manager's needs to explicitly appreciate diversity in the workplace. This sends a clear signal all groups that the organization is safe and inclusive workplace to work. To enhance

perceptions of workplace inclusion, organizations can implement various initiatives, such as organizing diversity and inclusion events, celebrating and recognizing individual and team achievements, providing mentorship programs, encouraging employee feedback, and establishing employee networks. Additionally, companies should monitor and evaluate their progress on diversity and inclusion to ensure that their efforts yield a significant impact.

Initially this study hypothesized that responsible leadership should strengthen the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety. The results surprisingly indicated that responsible leadership neither increase nor decrease this relationship. Although the results indicate that responsible leadership does not play a crucial role in influencing employees' psychological safety when organizations adopt employee-oriented HRM practices, this does not imply that leadership has no bearing on organizational functioning and performance. One potential explanation is since it is already conceptualized that socially responsible HRM including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM impact psychological safety. When these practices are already in place it signals to employees that organization s responsible so it may not matter whether leadership is responsible or not.

Another potential factor is the cultural context. In collectivist societies like Pakistan employees are more influenced by their peers or team members rather than individual. Therefore, leadership in banking organizations may be responsible, it's the culture that may limit leader's ability to influence psychological safety among employees. Furthermore, due to the high power distance culture in organizations in Pakistan, with the banking sector being no exception (Jehanzeb, 2022), employees are often not in direct contact with top management and whether leader is responsible or irresponsible, it may not be clearly displayed due to limited interaction with employees. So these can be potential reasons why banking employees do not view their leaders as responsible leaders.

5.5 Theoretical Contributions

This study has made significant theoretical contributions by advancing the concept of socially responsible HRM and examining its implementation in HRM literature. First, there hasn't been much research on socially responsible HRM, legal compliance HRM and employee oriented HRM in particular. The current study provides a significant theoretical contribution by studying socially responsible as a multi dimension construct unlike past studies which have treated

socially responsible HRM as a unidimensional construct (Abdelmotaleb & Saha, 2020; Estifo et al., 2019b; Shao, Zhou, & Gao, 2019; Shen & Benson, 2016; Shen & Zhang, 2017; Uddin et al., 2020). Researchers believe that socially responsible HRM practices should be considered separately as each practice has a distinct impact on outcome variables. This approach increases the validity and generalizability of the study's findings, which is supported by previous research (Newman et al., 2016; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011).

Moreover, previous research has not investigated the relationship between employee-oriented HRM, legal compliance HRM, and perceived workplace inclusion as an outcome variable. Previous studies examining socially responsible HRM as a multidimensional construct have primarily focused on its impact on organizational citizenship behavior (Gahlawat & Kundu, 2018; Newman et al., 2016), organizational commitment (Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011), intention to quit (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2015; Sobhani et al., 2021). Furthermore, the role of psychological safety as a mediator between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion has not been studied previously. The current study contributes to the literature by confirming the importance of psychological safety as a mediator in the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion.

Moreover, the responsible leadership as a moderating variable does not affect the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and perceived workplace inclusion. It is possible that there are other factors which can enhance psychological safety among employees when organizations implement employee-oriented HRM apart from leadership. This discovery is significant because it demonstrates that responsible leadership does not reinforce the connection between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety, offering a new theoretical insight to the existing literature.

Lastly, this study not only provides a great contribution to the body of literature in the fields of HRM and CSR but also reinforces the theoretical underpinnings of the signaling theory, which proposes that HRM practices serve as signals to workers, who then configure their behaviors and attitudes in the workplace through the interpretation of these signals (Guest et al., 2021; Y. Wang et al., 2020). The study tested signaling theory to examine the role of socially responsible HRM practices in predicting perceived workplace inclusion among employees through the mediating role of psychological safety and the moderating role of responsible leadership. Signaling theory is vastly used in HRM literature but when it comes to diversity and inclusion

literature, signaling theory is still in its infancy stage. Also perceived workplace inclusion is relatively unexplored topic (Chen & Tang, 2018). These findings provide valuable insights that can lead to further research on the significance of perceived workplace inclusion in organizational settings.

5.6 Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study has certain limitations that provide directions to researchers, guiding them towards areas that require further investigation to fill the gaps in current study's knowledge base. First the data is gathered from banking sector in Pakistan and the potential limitation of the study is the sample size. Mainly the data is collected from twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) of Pakistan. More branches and staff members taking part in the study would have been preferable for future studies.

Second, is the issue of generalizability of current study as the focus of the study is on banking sector only and different populations may produce different results than those established in this study because the behaviors of employees in the banking sector may be different from those in other industries so the population of current study may not be representative of employees in other industries. As a result, it is advisable to use caution when extending the study's findings to other sectors. Future studies might validate current studies model in different geographical regions and in different industries because the thought process and perception of employees about legally compliant HRM and employee oriented HRM might be different among employees in developing country than the employees in developed countries (Newman et al., 2016).

Third, in this study, data is collected using self-reporting questionnaires, where respondents are asked to answer questions based on their own experience. However, this method may lead to social desirability bias and common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003) as respondents may be more likely to provide answers that are seen as favorable or socially acceptable. Such biases can undermine the validity and generalizability of the study. Moreover, the current study requires employees to evaluate whether socially responsible HRM is being practiced in their organizations. It is important to note that this approach only assesses perceived socially responsible HRM rather than actual practices. As a result, the rating of socially responsible HRM perceptions may be influenced by various unobserved factors, leading to potential biases.

Furthermore due to time constraints, current study's design is cross-sectional. Cross-sectional study designs have been utilized in several studies in the past for this kind of study, however caution must be exercised when examining causal correlations. Therefore, a more thorough comprehensive understanding of the topic is recommended to future researchers with a qualitative, longitudinal or time-lag approach since employee psychological behaviours and attitudes undergo changes with the passage of time. Also, dearth of qualitative studies on socially responsible HRM indicates a critical gap in the literature of the dynamics and processes underlying socially responsible HRM (Omidi & Dal Zotto, 2022).

Fourth, it is also worth studying the impact of legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM on other key outcome variables in other industries. Since socially responsible HRM including legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM derives psychological safety and perceived workplace inclusion among employees. Additionally, current study has tested the model on the theoretical grounding of signaling theory, future studies can validate the model by testing with different theoretical support in order to contribute to theory elaboration.

Lastly, the study found that responsible leadership does not influence the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety, indicating that the banking sector has likely adopted socially responsible HRM practices. However, it is important to note that socially responsible HRM practices can only be implemented effectively with responsible leadership in the organization. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers should focus on to further dig out whether responsible leadership can be act as an antecedent of socially responsible HRM specifically, employee-oriented HRM.

5.7 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of socially responsible HRM practices, which encompassed legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM, on psychological safety and the subsequent impact of psychological safety on perceived workplace inclusion within the banking sector of Pakistan. The study also examines the mediating role of psychological safety in the relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and perceived workplace inclusion, as well as the moderating role of responsible leadership in the relationship between employee-oriented HRM and psychological safety.

The results of the study reveals that legal compliance HRM and employee-oriented HRM have a significant positive correlation with psychological safety. Furthermore, psychological safety is found to be significantly positively related to perceived workplace inclusion. The study also demonstrated the significant indirect effect of legal compliance HRM on perceived workplace inclusion through psychological safety. Similarly, the indirect effect of employee-oriented HRM on perceived workplace inclusion through psychological safety is also significant. In contrast to the conventional view on the importance of leadership in organizational functioning, the study found that responsible leadership does not have a significant impact on the relationship between employee-oriented HRM practices and psychological safety. The study has contributed novel theoretical and practical implications for scholars and industry practitioners.

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Appendix



NUST

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
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Socially Responsible Human Resource Management (HRM) and Employee Outcomes

Respected Participant:

My name is Huma Bashir, and I am a postgraduate student at NUST (National University of Sciences and Technology) Business School Islamabad. For my thesis research work, I am examining the effect of socially responsible HRM practices on employee outcomes. I am inviting you to participate in this study by completing the following survey.

The survey will take 5-7 minutes. Your responses will be kept confidential, and copies will be only provided to my research supervisor Dr. Mumtaz Ali Memon. If you choose to participate, please respond to the survey honestly. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time. The data collected will remain confidential and used solely for academic purpose.

Thank you for taking your time out for assisting me with this research. If you have any query about this or interested in the result of this study, you may contact us.

Sincerely,

Huma Bashir.

Student of MSHRM.

NUST Business School, Islamabad.

Huma.mhr21nbs@student.nust.edu.pk

Research Instructor

Assoc. Prof Dr. Mumtaz Ali Memon.

NUST Business School, Islamabad.

mumtaz.memon@nbs.nust.edu.pk

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1 Demographic Information

1.	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Others
2.	Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Below 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> Above 50
3.	Highest Qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Certifications <input type="checkbox"/> Others
5.	Industry/Sector (e.g., FMCG)	_____ <i>please specify</i>
6.	Job Position (e.g., Sales Manager)	_____ <i>please specify</i>
7.	Job Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Managerial <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor / Line Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Top Management
8.	Years of experience (in current organization)	<input type="checkbox"/> Below 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> above 10 years
9.	Years of experience (Overall)	<input type="checkbox"/> Below 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> above 10 years
10.	Current city of work	_____ <i>please specify</i>

Section 2: For each statement below please circle the appropriate responses:

1 = Strongly Disagree (SDA), 2 = Disagree (DA), 3 = Neutral (N),
4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

Socially responsible HRM practices	SDA (1)	DA (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
1. My firm ensures equal opportunity in human resource management.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Employees in my firm are paid above minimum wages and based on their performance.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Working hours in my firm do not exceed the maximum that the labour law permits.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My firm does not employ child labour or forced labour.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My firm has clear and detailed regulations on occupational health and safety.	1	2	3	4	5

6. My firm appoints staff monitoring labour standards in business partners; for example, suppliers and contractors.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My firm adopts flexible working hours and employment programs achieving work-life balance.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Employees participate in decisions making and total quality management.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Unions can represent and protect workers' rights and can be involved in determining labour terms.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My firm provides adequate training and development opportunities to employees.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My firm appoints adequate staff implementing general corporate social responsibility initiatives.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My firm rewards employees who contribute to charity, communities and other corporate social responsibility activities.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My firm gives priority in employment to candidates who are in difficulty and who are locals.	1	2	3	4	5

Responsible leadership	SDA (1)	DA (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
1. My supervisor demonstrates awareness of the relevant stakeholder's (customers, investors, suppliers, employees, the natural environment, the society, local community, or the government) claim.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My supervisor considers the consequences of decisions for the affected stakeholders (customers, investors, suppliers, employees, the natural environment, the society, local community, or the government).	1	2	3	4	5
3. My supervisor involves the affected stakeholders (customers, investors, suppliers, employees, the natural environment, the society, local community, or the government) in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My supervisor weighs different stakeholder (customers, investors, suppliers, employees, the natural environment, the society, local community, or the government) claims before making a decision.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My supervisor tries to achieve a consensus among the affected stakeholders (customers, investors, suppliers, employees, the natural	1	2	3	4	5

environment, the society, local community, or the government).					
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Psychological safety	SDA (1)	DA (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
1. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Members of this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	1	2	3	4	5
3. People in this organization do not reject others for being different.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is safe to take a risk in this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It is not difficult to ask other members of the organization for help.	1	2	3	4	5
6. No one on this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Working with members of this organization, my unique talents and values are used.	1	2	3	4	5

Perceived workplace inclusion	SDA (1)	DA (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
1. I feel like an accepted part of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel included in most activities at work.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Sometimes I feel like an outsider.	1	2	3	4	5