



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Talent Management and Employee Performance: A Quantitative Assessment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

<sup>1</sup>Homan Memon \* <sup>2</sup>Dr. Sadia Anwar <sup>3</sup>Abdul Qadir Patoli

1. Research fellow, Institute of Commerce & Management, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Institute of Commerce & Management, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Institute of Commerce, Laar Campus, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan

\*Corresponding Author: [homanmemon@gmail.com](mailto:homanmemon@gmail.com)

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the significant impact of talent management on employees' performance in the COVID-19, in public universities of Pakistan. This study examines employee performance through the determinants of talent recruitment, talent development, and retention management. Based on vigorous literature, the conceptualization of this study was designed. To accomplish this research, the data was collected through a survey questionnaire with the cross-sectional process. Random sampling was adopted to collect data from public universities in Sindh, Pakistan. After collection, the sample of 409 was found usable. With the assistance of AMOS, a positive and significant impact of talent management determinants were found on employee performance. The study's findings can provide guidelines for the higher authorities of public universities to deal with the education system in any challenging situation. This can also contribute to acquiring the improved quality of education provided through distance learning by enhancing the skills of teaching faculty in case of any disaster situation. The study may also contribute to the literature on human resource management and organizational behaviour. This study may also assist the Higher education commission and other related authorities in creating policies and strategies that can enhance the capabilities and the quality of education, specifically in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan.

**KEYWORDS** Retention Management Employee Performance, Talent Development, Talent Recruitment

#### Introduction

Every organization has a central issue to improve and enhance their productivity in this pandemic situation. The main source for improved productivity is employee performance, which is widely found in the literature on human resource management and organizational behavior (Rehan, Iqbal, Fatima, & Nawab, 2017). Employee performance is one of the most desirable developmental interventions for effective human resource management to effectively assess and manage employee performance to assure organizational success (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Though from several years, to improve and enhance the employee performance, the human resource management of every organization, along with its expanded responsibilities and complexities, was involved in the talent management to settle the strategies for the achievement of desired goals of the organization (Juarez-Tarraga, Santandreu-Mascarell, & Marin-Garcia, 2019). Though from the administrative process, talent management has become a continuous human resource management practice with an intentional fact to take best initiatives for achieving organizational outcomes.

Since the global lockdown due to COVID-19, every single person was forced to remain isolated for their and others' safety; such a pandemic situation influences every

individual, from corporate to students (Cooper, Mondal, & Antonopoulos, 2020). In this situation, where different sectors have suffered, the educational sector has also been affected because the higher authorities restricted the long-run lockdown of 1.5 billion school and university students in the physical classroom (IAU, 2020). According to the UNESCO report, sixty-one countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and America enforce the closure of educational institutes (UNESCO, 2020a, b). The only alternative to physical classes was Online-classes, whereas the students and teaching faculty face numerous difficulties and challenges as a result of an inadequate learning approach (Alam, 2020; Bao, 2020). Such an online education system can only be successful if it is well performed by both the teaching faculty and the students (Thongsri, Shen, & Bao, 2019b). Initially, the students showed a negative perception of online education due to the lack of enjoyment compared to the physical classrooms. Also, online teaching has become difficult for the teaching faculty because of the use of new technologies (Al-araibi, Mahrin, & Yusoff, 2019; Dewaele, Magdalena, & Saito, 2019; Rohman, Marji, Sugandi, & Nurhadi, 2020). In Pakistan currently, 177 universities are running, among which 58% are public sector universities, although 42% are private sector (Khattak, 2020). All these higher educational institutes are liable to obey the Higher Education Commission's (HEC) instructions. Following the advice of HEC, the Universities of Sindh have also started an online education system for students; they provided them the course materials and recorded lectures associated with different software, including ZOOM, Microsoft Team, and Learning Management System LMS. Such online sessions helped the education system continue the education process in such a pandemic (The News, 2020). But on the other side, the lack of resources and IT infrastructure has created difficulties for the smooth running of online education (Rafiq et al., 2020). Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that both students and faculty members face issues. It is difficult to do online teaching and learning for students and teachers in Pakistan. This study will provide some factors of talent management among teaching faculty that can cope with issues of the online education system in Pakistan. To keep in consideration, the present study attempts to investigate the factors such as talent recruitment, talent development, and retention management among the teaching faculty to achieve the desired outcomes of a prosperous education system in this pandemic situation. The outcomes of the research would be helpful for policymakers and planners to understand the requirement of the teaching community to face the challenges of this competitive era. This article explores the challenges faced by the teaching faculty to manage their talent to achieve the desired outcome of the continuation of the online education system in the Sindh province public universities. The findings of this research will contribute to the literature on organizational behavior and human resource management to enhance employee performance.

## **Literature Review**

In research, empirical evidence is witnessed that employees are the critical component of any organization, as their performances play a strategic role in facing global challenges for their concerned organizations (Yoon et al., 2019). Talent management is not only responsible for the recruitment, reinforcement, and evaluation process of talent, but it proceeds the skills growth, satisfaction among the employees, and improvement in employee performance (Kiriimi & Maende, 2019). For a developing country like Pakistan, it is considered a massive shift. Like all other organizations, the achievement of success in educational institutions also majorly depends on its employees. The organizations can achieve their vision and missions successfully with the assistance of talented employees. The management always faces the problem of enhancing the employees' talent by proper employee management that can attain increased employee performance (Mosisa, 2017). Researchers have highlighted that appropriate talent management policies and practices comprised of talent development, career development, and work-life balance may lead to employee commitment towards work involvement among employees by diminishing

turnover rates and enhancing employee performance (Bibi, 2019). Several researches have focused on different dimensions highlighting the importance of talent management towards employee performance as Alias et al. (2014) researched talent management and work engagement with employee retention, whereas Aljunabi (2014) explored the positive impact of talent management on work engagement.

Moreover, Mensah et al. (2016) believe that talented employee performance because of the talent management of employees can diminish the counterproductive behavior. In support of this research, Mkamburi & Kamaara (2017) explored that talent withdrawal, talent care, talent development factors of talent management positively impact job satisfaction and job satisfaction employee performance. Although after the keen interest of researchers towards talent management, there is still a need for more academic research in this domain, particularly in the pandemic's current situation, so that the employees' performance can be enhanced in their related fields in developing countries. For these reasons, this study intends to examine the deep understanding of talent management and employee performance in public sector universities of Sindh, Pakistan. This study also provides an understanding of top organizational management's role in enhancing talent management's impact on employee performance. Understanding the factors affecting the performance of teaching faculty can enhance the online education system in public sector universities of developing countries like Pakistan.

**Conceptualization and Hypotheses Development**

Performance is an oriented process through which the employees are directed to ensure their behavior is according to the task achievement while maximizing the productivity of their team and the organization itself. Thus, to analyze employees' performance, the organization needs certain aspects to evaluate whether an employee has accomplished its task well. In this conceptual framework section, the researchers have aimed to develop a relationship between talent management and employee performance. This can assist academics and practitioners in developing such strategies through talent management that can enhance the performance of employees. Based on extant literature, it was revealed that the practices of talent management should be involved from the beginning from the recruitment of the required talents, associating with its management by taking the necessary steps to maintain them. Different researchers have different perceptions about talent management as many believe it is a process of appealing; choosing; engaging; evolving; and retaining the employees' talent (Juarez-Tarraga et al., 2019).

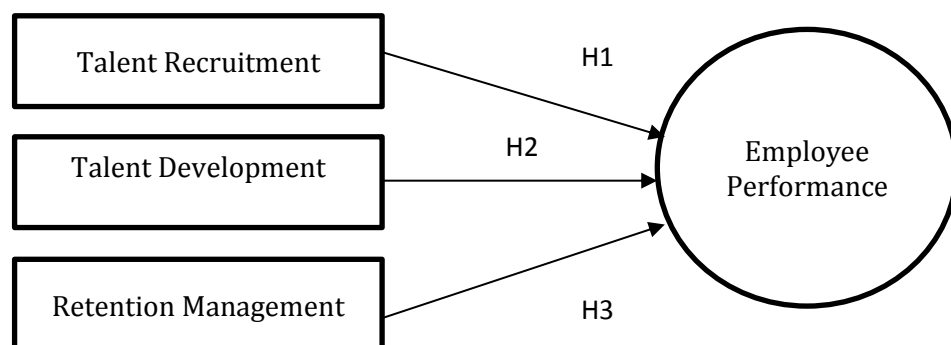


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study

**Talent Recruitment**

Based on literature in academics, talent management is explored as an ability to appeal to the top talent, which is crucial in universities. According to ACAS (2014), poor recruitment can result in high employer turnover and counterproductive employee

behavior. Undoubtedly, society has found numerous changes because of technology and globalization, which has led to increased competition for talent among employees in the organizations (Rafiq et al., 2020). For any organization, proper talent recruitment has become a challenging issue. Based on this argument and keeping in mind the challenges that the teaching faculties face in this pandemic, it is essential to identify the talent at the time of recruitment. Hence it is hypothesized as follows:

**H1:** Talent recruitment has a significant and positive impact on employee performance.

### **Talent Development**

Minbaeva and Collings (2013) believe that organizations don't need to recruit candidates with the best qualifications or experience. In contrast, organizations should focus on the fact how the talent of the appointed candidates can be best deployed for the increased output within the organization. Once the organization recognizes the talent of its employees, it can find various ways to enhance the competency and skills of that employee to face the challenges of the competitive environment (CIPD, 2006). In short, it can be said that talent development is a procedure that can improve the employees' abilities, knowledge, and behavior (Yoon et al., 2019). Based on this statement, in this pandemic situation, the teaching faculties require their skills to be further upgraded to meet the challenges of the online education system. Thus, it has been hypothesized as follows:

**H2:** Talent development has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

### **Retention Management**

The next most important component of managing talent is retention management. Just appealing to talented employees is not enough to solve the problem; it is also important that they be properly retained (Azeez, 2017). The main aim of retention management is to utilize the skills of talented employees to achieve the maximum competitive advantage for the organization in the long run. The literature explores that if organizations invest in retaining their talented employees, they can achieve a committed, motivated, satisfied, and properly engaged workforce in their organization (Aminudin, Ramlee, Shahimi, & Rus, 2017). Thus, in this pandemic situation, the higher authorities should take steps to retain the talent of teaching faculty to achieve the desired outcome and sustain the online education system smoothly. Thus, the researchers have hypothesized this argument as:

**H3:** Retention management has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

### **Material and Methods**

A descriptive survey was adopted as part of this research study's research design. A questionnaire, based on a Likert scale with 5 points, was developed and directed towards the selected participants for this research study to collect primary data. The teaching faculty was noted and administered for data collection to meet the primary objective. Hence, the technique used in this situation was random sampling, where everyone from the faculty had the same probability of being selected. There were almost 700 participants who participated in this study, and out of them, 446 respondents sent complete responses. The response rate from the participants was 64%. Due to some outliers' presence in the collected data found after examining the details of responses, 37 respondents' data was removed from the study, and finally, 409 were further taken for analysis. The population which was selected for this study was public university teachers. The procedure chosen to conduct the study was an online questionnaire that was shared with the participants through Facebook (Messenger & Chat Groups), WhatsApp, and emails from the selected teachers in educational institutions

of Sindh, Pakistan. Because these were the institutions that started the online learning system during COVID-19 and helped the community in education.

For analyzing the collected data, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to identify the observational data for any leading relationships among the researchers' constructs for this particular research study. Hair, Matthews, Matthews, & Sarstedt (2017) noted that SEM is strongly connected with powerful data operationalization as it can perform multiple regression analyses, especially in cases where the sample size is reasonably small. Researchers' conceptual frameworks can easily be tested. All the assumptions were carefully treated and complied with to develop a neutral research study.

### Measurement Scales

For all the required details in this research study, we examined the existing literature and adopted items thereby. Based on the 5 point Likert scale.

Talent Recruitment was analyzed by considering four points as Annakis, Dass & Isa (2014) accepted it.

Talent Development was evaluated using four items adapted from Oehley (2007, 2013) & Annakis, Dass & Isa (2014).

Retention management was scrutinized with five items adopted from the Oehley (2007, 2013) and Annakis, Dass & Isa (2014).

Employee performance was evaluated by five items taken from the study of Fadlullah & Sulaiman (2016).

### Results and Discussion

To confirm individual factors' reliability, the researchers tested the factor loadings. AsHair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2017), if the scores of factor loadings are more than 0.70 then the loadings can be meaningful. RM4 and EP2 were two items whose loads were unsatisfactory (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) (Table 1). Therefore, these were removed from this research study. For all the remaining researchers' constructs, the tests were done. According to Kline(2010), the recommended composite reliability scores are 0.70, and the results for this research study are between 0.845 and 0.881 (Table 1). As Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2010) noted, to find identical measures concerning variables, the factors must have values for average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50, and we have found values for the factors between 0.759 and 0.884. Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) discussed that Cronbach's alpha values are taken as satisfactory as the values are above 0.70 for our constructs. While we did not see any unexpected values for convergent validity for indicators selected in this study (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Measurement model**

Construct	Item code	Factor loadings	CR	AVE	$\alpha$
Talent recruitment (TR)	tr2	0.883	0.881	0.819	0.862
	tr3	0.878			
	tr1	0.842			
Talent development (TD)	td1	0.887	0.863	0.884	0.890
	td2	0.832			
	td4	0.819			
Retention management (RM)	rm1	0.873	0.845	0.759	0.853
	rm2	0.850			

	rm3	0.825			
	rm5	0.798			
Employee performance (EP)	ep5	0.882	0.860	0.799	0.828
	ep4	0.870			
	ep3	0.812			
	ep1	0.787			

Abbreviations: AVE = summation of the square of the factor loadings; CR = square of the summation of the factor loadings;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha

Fornell & Larcker (1981) further noted the discriminant validity (DV), which is used to observe (if any) discrimination exists between the constructs and to which extent. The ascended correlations were checked against the AVE's square root values, and it was found that the square root values for AVE (diagonally occurred) are greater than the values for definite construct's rows and columns (Table 2). Therefore, discriminant validity (DV) was confirmed for the constructs.

**Table 2**  
**Discriminant Validity**

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Talent recruitment	<b>0.823</b>			
2. Talent development	0.289	<b>0.834</b>		
3. Retention management	0.308	0.140	<b>0.859</b>	
4. Employee performance	0.331	0.170	0.144	<b>0.893</b>

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the other entries represent the correlations.

**Structural Model**

AMOS was used to report fit indices and chi-square statistic for the constructs where  $\chi^2$  values seemed insignificant (CMIN/df = 2.213;  $p > 0.005$ ) (Figure 2 and Table 3). Hair et al. (2018) also worked on this model's fitness for the used data whereby other values (GFI = 0.901; AGFI = 0.973; NFI = 0.962; CFI = 0.928; and RMSEA = 0.037) which confirm the model's fitness for said constructs (cutoff value = 0.08) (Figure 2 and Table 3).

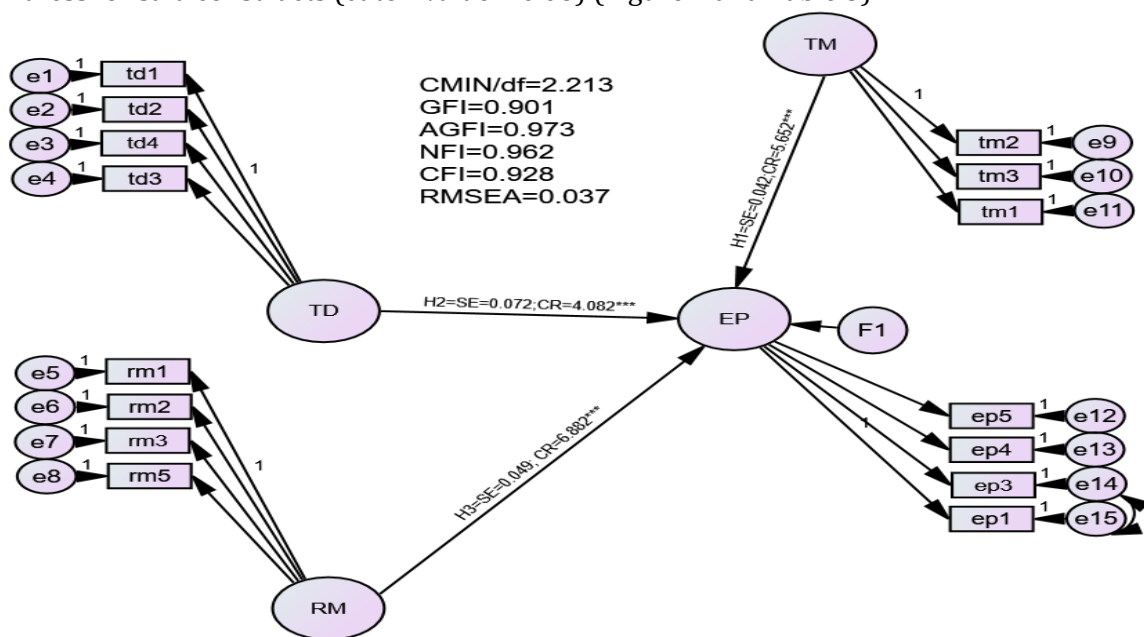


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model

**Table 3**  
**Model fit indices**

Model fit indicators	CMIN/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
	2.213	0.901	0.973	0.962	0.928	0.037
Suggested values	< 3	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.05

Abbreviations: CMIN=  $\chi^2$ /Chi-square/df; df= degree of freedom; GFI=goodness of fit index; AGFI=adjusted goodness of fit index; NFI= normed fit index; CFI= comparative fit index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

To confirm the hypotheses, which were based on the critical ratio (CR) and standard error (ER) values, the maximum likelihood estimates ensure the path significance level of  $< 0.01^{***}$ . As for H1's SEM values (SE = 0.042; CR = 5.652<sup>\*\*\*</sup>;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) (Figure 2 and Table 4) showed a powerful and positive impact of TR on EP. So, the hypothesis, H1, was accepted. Also, H2 values (SE = 0.072, CR = 4.082<sup>\*\*\*</sup>;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) (Figure 2 and Table 4) showed an important and positive impact of TD on EP. Therefore, acceptance for H2 was confirmed. Lastly, RM had a significantly positive effect on EP (H3: SE = 0.049; CR = 6.882<sup>\*\*\*</sup>;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) (Figure 2 and Table 4), and the last hypothesis, H3, was also supported by this significance.

**Table 4.**  
**SEM estimations**

H.No.	Independent variables	Path	Dependent variables	Estimate	SE	CR	P	Decision
H1	TM	→	EP	0.321	0.042	5.652	***	Accepted
H2	TD	→	EP	0.239	0.072	4.082	***	Accepted
H3	RM	→	EP	0.239	0.049	6.882	***	Accepted

Abbreviations: SE=standard error; CR=critical ratio; p=significance level <sup>\*\*\*</sup> $p < 0.05$

## Conclusion

In this pandemic and challenging era, this research has proposed the prediction that employee performance can be enhanced through talent management of employees. The significance of talent management comprised of talent recruitment, development, and retention management is thoroughly discussed. According to the extant literature, the conceptualization was developed. The results are investigated through cross-sectional data collection. For H1, the analysis found a significant and positive effect of talent recruitment on employee performance among the teaching faculty in Pakistan, the results supporting the outcomes of previous investigations (Arthur et al., 2017). The outcomes of this research explore that talented employees are far better than the average employees working in the organization. The organization can earn more profit and increase production if it has talented employees. Talent recruitment deals with the selection of appropriate candidates for a particular job. This assures that talented employees work hard to achieve the organization's competitive advantage (Taie, 2015). Based on the support of the literature, the outcomes of this research support a significant effect of talent development on employee performance (H2) (Rachel, Pavithra & Imran, 2016). However, higher education institutions are self-sufficient in establishing their proper framework to manage and enhance the performance levels of their employees along with the appropriate talent development system. Mostly the universities focus on the performance of an individual.

To face the challenges of this current scenario, the universities compete against talent shortage. Meanwhile, to face the challenges of such a pandemic situation, the educational institutions should take steps to enhance the knowledge of their employees to develop unique human resources that can make such academic universities a place with innovative ideas, transparent policies, and quality service. Lastly, the effect of retention

management on employee performance was also found positive (H3). In literature, such findings were found, but other than in the contexts of Pakistan (Devi, 2017). Organizations can manage retention by increasing their remunerations and giving them intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to enhance their performances (Devi, 2017). The positive association of talent recruitment, development, and retention management has highlighted the fact that higher authorities like HEC should take a keen interest in the talent management of teaching faculties to face the challenges of shortage, qualified and incompetent staff to implement strategic plans in the online education system to manage the lack of knowledge and establish policy guideline to implement the strategy in this pandemic situation (Miirio et al., 2016; Bradley, 2016). Therefore, findings suggest that the skills and knowledge of the teaching faculty can be enhanced with the proper talent development even after recruitment to improve the effective performance of both the employees and universities.

This study can provide a wide vision to the directive higher education authorities as a practical implication in managing their policies according to the challenging situations. The proper talent management may not only encourage the teaching faculty to sustain a smooth education system in the pandemic situation, which has led to a new shift in the education system, but they can retain the organization for a long time. Because proper talent management can ease the process of success in any organization. Therefore, this study has proposed to implicate strategies that can improve the performance of teaching faculty and the education quality of universities through talent management in such a unique situation of COVID-19. The current study suggests that the university management must provide technical training to its employees regarding the online learning system. The higher education commission should also promote technological information facilities, like e-service quality and e-information quality in the Sindh province. Hence, to reduce the post-effect of COVID-19 on the education system in Pakistan, the significant practical implication of this study can provide a solution that may surely assist in facing the current challenges related to the online education system. Hence, the governments, higher education commissions, and university authorities should realize the significance of significant factors that can help them improve the universities' performance. The current study has unique insights that may assist the universities in fighting the effects of COVID-19.



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