

Impact Of Sustainable HRM Practices on Employee Performance During Covid-19

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of Sustainable Human Resource Practices on Employee Performance during COVID-19. This study seeks to examine the effect of employee care, work flexibility, employee cooperation, and training on employee performance during COVID-19. The target population of the study is the Banking sector of Sialkot, Pakistan. The results concluded that employee care, work flexibility, employee cooperation and training have a significant positive relationship with employee performance. The study suggests that these practices must be incorporated in the work places to improve the employee performance. The concept of sustainable human resource management (HRM) has not been widely studied in Pakistan and this study is a contribution towards filling this gap. For future studies, the impact of Sustainable HRM may be examined across various sectors in Pakistan, with larger sample sizes.

Keywords: Sustainable HRM; COVID-19; Employee Performance; Banking Sector; Pakistan

1. Introduction

Human resource management refers to the organized or systematic process of managing the human resources of an organization i.e. the people working in an organization. Human Resource Management can be defined as an effective and efficient management of the people working in an organization so that organizational and individual objectives are met. The main functions of HRM include; hiring employees, training employees, appraising performance of employees, compensating employees, and managing the employer-employee relations (Gary, 2011).

“HRM is a distinctive approach to employment management, which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce...” (Storey, 1995, p. 5). HRM considers employees to be the most valuable asset of the organization. As organizations are made up of people, who work together to achieve common organizational objectives, hence it is important keep them motivated in order to achieve the desired organizational performance and to keep employees committed to the organization (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2010). HRM is concerned with managing employees during every phase of their employment, so human

resource management can strongly impact the employee performance. A carefully developed human resource management can help organization to meet and exceed its goals.

Studies have proven a positive relation between human resource practices and employee performance but recently attention has been diverted to a new concept of “Sustainable Human Resource Management”. This concept is gaining a lot importance in Pakistan in recent years. Sustainable HRM is defined as the recruitment, selection, training and development, and decruitment of employees, that is socially responsible and economically beneficial to the organization (Ehnert, 2006). Organizations are now realizing the need incorporate sustainable human resource practices and are now placing much importance to it. In sustainable human resource management there is a focus on abstaining from the use of HR practices that affect the employees and the society negatively, and from using HR practices that are focused on cutting short-term financial costs, at the expensive of long-term financial, social and ecological costs (Mariappanadar, 2003). Secondly it involves establishing a relationship between the employees and the organization that is mutually beneficial (Ehnert, 2009).

A few studies have been conducted in Pakistan to check the impact of sustainable human resource management on employee performance but thus far to our knowledge, no study has been conducted to study that how sustainable human resource practices have impacted employee performance during COVID-19, the global pandemic, when employee performance was being affected due to presenteeism , safety concerns, expected layoffs, difficulties in adapting to virtual teams, telecommuting, difficulty in maintaining work life balance, and social distancing. So far no research has been conducted in context of the banking sector or any other sector of Sialkot. So this study seeks to close this gap by focusing on a new idea, where an untapped sector and effects of global pandemic are being included to check how sustainable human resource management and job performance will relate under such condition. The objective of this research paper is to develop and broaden the understanding of this concept considering new conditions, sector and city.

This study takes sustainable human resource practices as an independent variable and employee performance as a dependent variable. This study is aims to answer that how sustainable HR practices such as care for employees, work flexibility, employee cooperation and training, have impacted employee performance during global pandemic COVID-19.

In the second section of this article the relevant literature has been discussed, and hypothesis and theoretical frame work has been developed. Research methodology has been mentioned in the

section 3. Section four shows the results of the data analysis and their interpretation. In section five and six discussion and conclusion is presented. In section 7 managerial implications are discussed. In the last section, limitations of the study and recommendations have been included respectively.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical Background through “Social Exchange Theory”:

This research is build upon the “Social exchange theory”. This theory is considered to be one of the most influential concepts of Sociology and Social Psychology (Narwin, 2016). A social exchange can be referred as “a two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding process” (Emerson, 1976, p. 336). The theory states that the social human behaviour or relationships are primarily based on a exchange process, whereby each individual assesses the benefits and the risks of the relationship (Homans, 1958). Organ (1990) writes that social exchange theory is reciprocal in nature; this means that if employees receive what they perceive as favourable treatment from the organization, they will reciprocate by taking actions and decisions that promise more positive outcomes for the organization. This helps to create ‘give and take’ relationship between the organization and the employees that maximizes benefits for both.

If organizations design their HRM practices on the basis of “Social Exchange Theory” i.e. making their HR practices more gratifying for the employees, the organizations can benefit, in the form of increased employee loyalty, engagement and motivation (Narwin, 2016). So in a nutshell while the organization considers the interest of the employees; the employees reciprocate or give back to the organization by achieving the organizational goals by means of improved employee performance. Therefore it can be said that the sustainable HRM practices are based on the premise of social exchange theory, as “Social Exchange Theory” states that lasting and fulfilling social relationships are formulated on the basis of mutual benefit, sustainable HR practices also aim to develop a relationship between the employer, employees, community and environment that is mutually rewarding for all the parties involved.

2.2. Employee Performance

‘Individual Performance’ or ‘Job Performance’ are some of the other names for ‘Employee Performance’ (Fonkeng, 2018). It is a multifaceted concept that has been defined by numerous scholars all over the world. Campbell (1990) defines employee performance as activities, behavior or actions of employees that help the organization achieve its objectives. According to Fonkeng

(2018) the employee performance refers to the execution of tasks and responsibilities relating to the job, and how well they're performed. It is concerned with the quality and quantity of the output or the effectiveness and efficiency of the work performed.

Good performance of employees is important for the success of the organization. There are numerous studies that confirm the relationship between good employee performance and good organizational performance. Performance appraisals are carried out routinely by organizations to evaluate the performance of the employees against pre set performance standards, as part of performance management process.

In the wake of COVID-19 businesses had to adapt quickly to the changing conditions, such as work from home practices. For employees it meant adopting new ways of working, managing work life balance, learning new digital skills and leading virtual teams (Agrawal et al., 2020). Employees reported increased level of stress, anxiety, and frustration because of overall uncertainty, job insecurity, fear of virus contraction, and social isolation (Hamouche, 2020). These factors are known for effecting the employee performance adversely (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021).

Different researches have attempted to define the dimensions of the employee performance. For instance Koopmans et al. (2014) outlines three aspects of employee performance namely task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviors. Similarly a study by Pradhan and Jena (2017) points out the same dimensions of employee performance but introduces adaptive performance as the third dimensions instead of counterproductive work behaviors. The study suggests that task performance refers to the behavior of employees associated with carrying out the basic tasks and responsibilities assigned to them as part of their job description. This implies that task performance depends on the skill of an employee to perform the task, and the ability to strategically plan and execute the task in an effective and efficient way. Contextual performance refers to the behavior of an employee which directly or indirectly promotes the general well being of the organization including employees. Baard et al. (2014) defines adaptive performance refers to how well the employees performance when faced with a challenge. This study, however aims to study the impact of sustainable HR practices on task performance of employees.

2.3. Sustainable HR practices

The topic of sustainable Human Resource practices has received significant importance in the last two decades, and this attention continues to grow. The question here arises what is sustainable HRM and how it differs from traditional HRM? Sustainable HRM can be defined as the incorporation of HRM strategies that are long-term oriented, and which help the organization achieve its financial, ecological and social objectives, which make impact within the organization as well as outside the organization (Ehnert et al., 2016). According to Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė (2018) justice and fairness at workplace, focus on employee development, encouraging employee participation, offering work flexibility, fostering workplace cooperation and care for environment are some of the major characteristics of sustainable HRM. Another study states that Sustainable HRM focuses on establishing relationship with the employees that is based on sincerity, providing good working conditions to the workers, providing opportunities to employees for growth and development, and ensuring the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of the employees at workplace (Wikhamn, 2019). Dyllick and Muff (2016) highlights four dimensions of sustainable HRM which include Common Good HRM, Green HRM, Socially Responsible HRM and Triple Bottom Line HRM

Sustainable HRM does not only focus on the financial performance of the organization, instead it focuses on a broad range of objectives (Ehnert et al., 2016). This is supported by Kramar (2014) which says that while strategic HRM focuses on the organizational performance usually in terms of monetary or financial gains, sustainable HRM focuses on environmental, social, human and financial outcomes. Another study argues that traditional HRM does consider employees as an important asset of the firm, which is crucial to achieve good organizational performance, but it does not gives importance to their problems and concerns, and treats employees as means to an end (Guest, 1997). Another study writes that sustainable HRM aims to manage employees in a way that they help the organization to meet its objectives, and doing so, while meeting their personal, family and community needs (Sang & Kirui).

A number of studies have proved a positive relationship between sustainable HRM and customer satisfaction, organizational performance, employee performance and other variables. For instance Malik et al. (2020) examined the impact of sustainable HRM practices on the employee performance in the forest industry in Pakistan, using organization commitment as a moderator. The results of the research stated that sustainable recruitment and selection, training and

development, compensation and rewards, and performance appraisal have positive relation with employee performance. Thus, the studies related to sustainable HRM and their impact on the performance of employees and organizations must be expanded across different sectors, industries and cultures. This study examines the impact of following sustainable HR practices; Care for Employees, Work Flexibility, Employee Cooperation, and Training, on the employee performance during COVID-19, in the banking sector of Sialkot, Pakistan.

2.3.1. Care for Employees and Employee Performance

Sustainable HRM emphasizes that organizations must retain healthy and productive workforce (Ehnert, 2009). Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė (2018) wrote that care of employees by the organization; refers to the safety and health management of employees or the management's safety practices. This includes working conditions, workload, stress, prevention of diseases and other safety standards. Another study explains occupational health and safety management as those HR strategies that are employed to reduce or minimize any factors at the workplace that may harm the workers or put their health and safety at risk (Den Hartog & Verburg, 2004). A recent study pointed out that as employees are returning to workplaces, employers are facing a major challenge of reducing the transmission of COVID-19 at workplace (Barnes & Sax, 2020). COVID-19 safety measures need to be in place in order to ensure safety of workers and smooth running of the businesses.

A study by Anitha (2014) showed that the working conditions had significant impact on the employee engagement which in turn affects the employee performance. Similarly according to Guastello (1992) employees who believe that their workplaces are safe experience lower levels of job anxiety and stress. Another study by Kaynak et al. (2016) confirmed that there is a significant relationship between safety procedures, and health and safety rules in an organization and, employee performance. This study aims to examine the relationship between management safety practices during COVID-19 and employee performance. Therefore, following is hypothesized:

H1a: There is a significant positive relation between care for employees and employee performance during COVID-19.

H1b: There is a significant positive impact of employee on employee performance during COVID-19.

2.3.2. Work Flexibility and Employee Performance

Work Flexibility, is part of Sustainable HRM practice. It is important to note that work flexibility must be offered in accordance with the needs of the employee, not the employer. The need for flexibility in reference to remote working and working hours was first recognized by Finnish companies (Järlström et al., 2018). Concepts like flexible working hours, remote working and part-time working are becoming increasingly common. A study by Russell et al. (2009) showed that part-time work and flexi-time tend to reduce work pressure and work-life conflict. A study on Turkish firms revealed that flexible working hours which allows employees to decide their timings for coming to, and leaving the workplace, have high loyalty towards the organization (Altindag & Siller, 2014). However a study by Albion (2004) states that organizations can harness the benefit of flexible work options in the form of good employee performance only if the flexible work options are employee driven, not when they are designed to meet the managements agenda.

According to study by Abid and Barech (2017) flexible working hours significantly impact employee performance and also help to improve work life balance. Another study was conducted in educational institutes of Peshawar, Pakistan; according to it time flexibility is the main factor that influences employee performance. The study revealed that in order to increase productivity, flexible time option should be given to employees (Hashim et al., 2017).

Another study supports those businesses with flexible work arrangement policies have higher employee performance. The same study also emphasizes that the employee performance is dependent on how flexible work policies are implemented (Stroup & Yoon, 2016). A recent research carried out in educational institutes of Karachi states that flexible work arrangements strongly influence job satisfaction (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H2a: There is a significant positive relation between Work Flexibility and Employee Performance during COVID-19

H2b: There is a significant positive impact of Work Flexibility on Employee Performance during COVID-19

2.3.3. Employee Cooperation and Employee Performance

Stankevičiūtė and Savanevičienė (2018) says that employee cooperation refers to good relationships of managers and employees, and team work. Keskinen (2017) defines workplace cooperation as the firm policies that focus on informing, consulting and including employees in business decision-making. The study also emphasizes that such policies help to reduce workplace

conflict and improve organizational performance. According to Hamlin (n.d) organizations where work is usually done in teams, the workplace cooperation is one of the major factors that affects the productivity of the employees. Another study by Hirsig et al. (2014) emphasizes that cooperation promotes job satisfaction, decreases the chances of workplace conflicts, results in lower absenteeism, and improves the quality and quantity of the work done. Similarly a study by Deery and Iverson (2005) concluded that cooperative labor management relationships contribute to higher productivity and improved customer service. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H3a: There is a significant positive relation between Employee Cooperation and Employee Performance during COVID-19

H3b: There is a significant positive impact of Employee Cooperation on Employee Performance during COVID-19

2.3.4. Training and Employee Performance

Training can be defined as work-related education that aims to increase workers' skills and efficiency (Stimpson & Farquharson, 2002). Syed et al. (2020) defines training as a formal process of increasing the organization performance by improving the skills of the workers through different educational programs. While employee training focuses on increasing the work related education and skills of employees so that the current job can be performed better, development focuses on personal growth of employees, in other words the development focuses on future whereas training focuses on the present (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2010).

According to a research study, training and development enhances employees' skills and results in improved job performance and higher commitment towards the organization (Grossman & Salas, 2011). This is also supported by a recent study which states that training has a positive impact on organization productivity, and is mutually beneficial to the employee and the employer (Kusumawati & Wahyuni, 2019). Another research on training and development states that sustainable human resource practices like training and development are important to retain employees (Ibrahim & Rahman, 2017).

According to the 'Expectancy Theory' presented by Victor Vroom, employees will be encouraged to attend training if they expect that the training will have positive consequences for them; making the work easier for them and increasing their performance (Yin et al., 2009). Similarly Skinner's theory of reinforcement suggests that individuals are likely to repeat a behavior if positive outcome is attached to it, this suggests that training and development must be designed and organized on

these basis (Skinner, 2014). However Social learning theory states that learning can occur through instruction whether verbal or written, or through observation or imitation, and does not requires direct reinforcement (Ismail, 2017). These theories provide insight into how employees can be trained more effectively and efficiently.

Multitudes of studies have confirmed the positive relationship between training of employees, and employee performance. For instance Cabral and Dhar (2019) confirmed in their study that training can be used to positively influence the job performance. According to Ogbeibu et al. (2020) training has positive impact on team creativity as well. Similarly Malik et al. (2020) examined the relationship between training and development, and employee performance, and concluded that there is a positive relation between them. So therefore, it is hypothesized:

H4a: There is a significant positive relation between training and employee performance during COVID-19

H4b: There is a significant positive impact of training on employee performance during COVID-19

2.4. Role of COVID-19 and HR practice

WHO (World Health Organization) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11th March, 2020 (Ducharme, 2020). This health crisis disrupted the day to day life. Countries were pushed into country-wide lockdowns, national borders were closed, travelling was restricted, schools, businesses, government offices and recreational places were shutdown. COVID-19 can be blamed for one of the greatest workplace transformations (Koirala & Acharya, 2020). During the lockdowns, millions of people across the globe shifted to work-from-home model or teleworking, among them majority of people were those who had no previous experience in online working, moreover as the global economy slowed, millions of workers lost their jobs (Kniffin et al., 2020). This brought strategic challenges not only for employees, in the form stress, low productivity, burnout and work-life balance issues but also for human resource management, which have ultimately affected the employee performance.

A survey of 229 companies revealed that about 80% of the workers of 50% of these companies switched to work from home during the initial stages of COVID-19 pandemic (Gartner, 2020). Kniffin et al. (2020) pointed out that COVID-19 has compelled the businesses to formulate a new workplace model which includes; work from home, virtual teams and, leadership and management of virtual teams. A study by Koirala and Acharya (2020) noted that due to COVID-19, the HR

departments of the organizations had to shift their focus on activities such as; safety of employees, knowledge management, coordination and networking, capacity building and stress management in order to ensure smooth functioning of the organization.

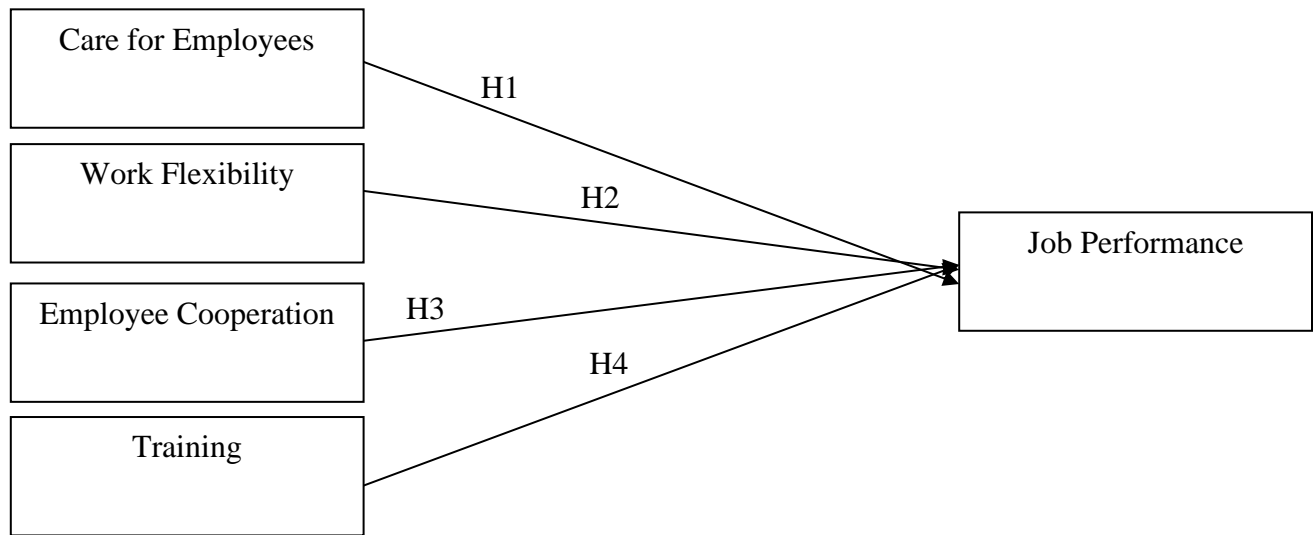
Unlike traditional HRM practices, sustainable HRM practices focus on well-being of employees and previous studies have shown positive relation between sustainable HR practices and the job performance. In this study, authors aim to investigate how during COVID-19 the sustainable HR practices have impacted the employee performance.

2.5. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

This study is focused on examining the relationship between sustainable Human Resource Practices and Employee Performance, in the Banking sector of Sialkot, Pakistan. Thorough literature review has been used to construct the following conceptual model.

Figure 1

Conceptual model and hypotheses



This is an empirical study, quantitative in nature. This study aims to find the correlation between HRM practices and Employee performance, and the impact of Sustainable HRM practices on the employee performance during COVID-19, therefore the study can be classified as descriptive and causal. Survey research strategy was employed to collect the data by means of questionnaires. Interviews were not preferred because they are generally time consuming and expensive to conduct. Unit of Analysis for this study are individuals i.e. employees working at managerial positions in the banks of Sialkot, Pakistan. It is a cross-sectional study because data has only been collected once.

3.1. Sample Size and the Characteristics of the Sample

The target population for the study was the employees working at managerial positions in the Banking sector of Sialkot, Pakistan. However the total size of the population could not be determined because no information was available on the total number of bank branches in Sialkot, and the numbers of employees working in those branches, secondary sources of information were thoroughly checked to ensure this. Therefore to determine the total size of the population was not possible, so the population size in this study is classified as unknown. Furthermore considering the time constraints, and resources to access the banks, convenience sampling method was used and data was collected from 103 respondents. The respondents were categorized according to gender, age, education, work experience, and employment level or job status. The details of the demographics of the respondents have been given in the portion of descriptive statistics, **table 3**.

3.2. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

The data for the research has been collected through questionnaire survey i.e. primary source of data collection. The scale to measure employee task performance was adopted from (Koopmans et al., 2014), the scale to measure employee care was adopted from (Hayes et al., 1998), the scale to measure work flexibility was adopted from (Bydén, 2017), the scale to measure employee cooperation was adopted from (Steffgen et al., 2015) and lastly to measure training, the scale was adopted from (Singh, 2004). There were a total of 28 questions in the questionnaire, excluding the questions relating to the demographics. The total number of questions including the demographics was 33. The numbers of items used to measure each variable have been given in detail, in Table 1.

Version 26 of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) by IBM: Chicago, USA, was used for the purpose of data analysis. The reliability of the scales used to measure the variables, was determined through Cronbach's Alpha. Frequency tables were established for the demographics of the respondents and, mean and standard deviation was calculated for each variable. To test the hypotheses Pearson's Correlation Analysis was used, along with simple linear regression.

4. Results And Analysis

4.1. Reliability Analysis

As per (Pallant, 2007) the value of Cronbach's Alpha must be more than 0.7, for ensuring the reliability of the data. However if the number of the items in a scale is less than 10 then a

Cronbach's Alpha value of greater 0.5 is acceptable. The following **table 1** shows that the 6 scales used in this study meet the criteria.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Task Performance	7	0.875
Employee Care	10	0.941
Work Flexibility	3	0.685
Employee Cooperation	2	0.859
Employee Training	6	0.875

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The total number of respondents was 103. The majority of the respondents were female, with a percentage of 58.3%. While majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20-25 and had working experience of 0-1 years. Moreover 44.7% of the respondents were working at junior level positions and 40.8% were working at middle level positions. Lastly 50.5% of the respondents were graduates, and 28.2% were postgraduates. The mean, standard deviation for the variables and other descriptive statistics are illustrated below, **table 2 and table 3**:

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Employee Performance	3.42	.982
Employee Care	3.35	1.04
Work Flexibility	2.80	.978
Employee Cooperation	3.85	1.07
Training	3.08	.957

Table 3

Category		Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	41	39.8
	Female	60	58.3
	Other	2	1.9
Age	20-25	52	50.5
	26-36	42	40.8
	37-47	5	4.9
	48 or above	4	3.9
Education	Undergraduate	22	21.4
	Graduate	52	50.5
	Postgraduate	29	28.2
Work Experience	0-1	44	42.7
	2-3	27	26.2
	4-5	19	18.4
	6 or above	13	12.6
Employment Level	Junior	46	44.7
	Middle	42	40.8
	Senior	15	14.6

Total	103	100.0	<i>Respondents'</i> <i>Demographics</i>
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4.3. Correlation and Regression Analysis

Correlation analysis helps to determine the nature of relationship i.e. direction and strength between two variables. The correlation coefficient ranges between -1 and +1 (Investopedia, 2021). The closer is the value of correlation coefficient to absolute 1; the stronger is the relationship between the variables, whereas the negative and positive signs show the direction of the relationship. The correlation results (shown in **table 4 below**) reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between employee performance and employee care (where $r = 0.0672$ and p is less than 0.01), employee performance and work flexibility (where $r = 0.475$ and p is less than 0.01), employee performance and employee cooperation (where $r = 0.649$ and p is less than 0.01) and, employee performance and training (where $r = 0.568$ and p is less than 0.01). These results are in line with the hypotheses formulated above.

Table 4

Correlations

Variables	Employee Performance
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Employee Care:

Pearson Correlation (r)	0.672**
P-value (2-tailed)	.000

Work Flexibility:

Pearson Correlation (r)	0.475**
P-value (2-tailed)	.000

Employee Cooperation:

Pearson Correlation (r)	0.649**
P-value (2-tailed)	.000

Training:

Pearson Correlation (r)	0.568**
P-value	.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Simple linear regression has been used to measure the impact of Sustainable HR practices, the independent variables; Employee Care, Work Flexibility, Employee Cooperation and Training, one by one on Employee Performance i.e. the dependent variable. The findings of the simple linear regression are shown in the **table 5** below. The table demonstrates that there is a significant positive impact of, care for employees, on employee performance (where p is less than 0.05 p, B = 0.0672, R-Square = .452). The value of beta is positive, therefore showing positive relationship between care for employee and employee performance, the value of p is below 0.05 which suggests that our results are significant and the value of R-square shows that 45.2% of the variation in dependent variable i.e. employee performance is caused by the independent variable. The results also show that there is a significant positive impact of work flexibility, on employee performance (where p is less than 0.05, B = 0.475, R-Square = .226). The positive value of beta indicates that there is a positive relationship between work flexibility and employee performance, value of p is less than 0.05, this indicates that our results are significant and the value of R-square indicates that 22.6% of the variation in employee performance is explained by work flexibility.

Similarly the results show that there is a significant positive impact of employee cooperation, on employee performance (where p is less than 0.05, B = 0.649 R-Square =.421). The value of beta is positive therefore showing positive relationship between both the variables, the value of p is less than 0.05 thus indicating statistical significance of the results, and lastly the value of R-square indicates that 42.1% of the variation in employee performance i.e. the dependent variable, is caused by employee cooperation i.e. the independent variable. The table also shows that there is a significant positive impact of training, on employee performance (where p is less than 0.05, B = 0.568, R-Square =.323). The value beta is positive thus indicating positive relationship between both the variables, the value of p is less than 0.05 which indicates statistical significance of the

results and lastly the value of R-square indicates that the variation of 32.3% in the dependent variable i.e. employee performance is explained by the independent variable i.e. training. Moreover the t-values are greater than 2, for all the variables which further testify the statistical significance of the results. Therefore based on the findings of correlation analysis and simple linear regression analysis, the results support all 8 hypotheses of this study.

Table 5

Regression Analysis Results

Variables	Employee Performance			
	Standardized Beta	R-Square	T-Value	P- Value
Employee Care	0.672	.452	9.13	.000
Work Flexibility	0.475	.226	5.43	.000
Employee Cooperation	0.649	.421	8.58	.000
Training	0.568	.323	6.94	.000

Dependent variable: employee performance. Independent variables: employee care, work flexibility, employee cooperation, training; $p < 005$ is significant.

5. Discussion

The emphasis of this study was on sustainability in human resource management strategies (employee well-being, job flexibility, collaboration, and training). According to the findings of this study, sustainable human resource strategies have a positive influence on employee performance. This study contributes to the corpus of knowledge in long-term human resource management. By demonstrating how this impacts employee performance, we get a better grasp of the subject. Because it has a direct influence on employee performance and hence business success, sustainable human resource management has become an essential topic for firms, HR managers, researchers, and practitioners all over the world. The study's results indicate a correlation between long-term approaches to human resource management and greater levels of employee productivity.

Using a simple linear regression model, we discovered that sustainable human resource strategies improved employee performance. Both analyses yielded statistically significant findings. It has therefore made a significant contribution to HRM literature in Pakistan by investigating this link in the context of Sialkot's banking industry during COVID-19 in Pakistan's banking sector.

According to the findings of the current study, worker care has a positive influence on employee performance (Anitha, 2014). The results of this research back with ours, which discovered a link between employee performance and work flexibility (Abid & Barech, 2017). Furthermore, a study by confirms our finding that training boosts employee performance (Kusumawati & Wahyuni, 2019). Finally, our study showed a significant positive association between employee cooperation and employee performance, which was verified by an examination of employee performance. (2014) (Hirsig et al.).

Although several studies on the impact of sustainable HRM practices on work performance have been conducted in Pakistan, many sectors and cities in Pakistan remain undeveloped in this field of study. Researchers were able to get a better understanding of how these elements interacted during a global pandemic by studying an undiscovered city and sector. Because these aspects have a positive association with employee performance, it is feasible to improve job performance by using sustainable human resource management approaches. People are a company's most precious asset, whether it is public or private. People are the lifeblood of businesses. For example, technology has transformed the way labor is performed, and when businesses change and confront new challenges such as global pandemics or other concerns, sustainable human resource management may give a feasible answer. The time has come for companies to embrace a more sustainable approach.

The researchers aimed to evaluate how sustainable human resource management techniques influenced employee performance on COVID-19. The banking business in Sialkot, Pakistan, in particular, was selected because it is home to a significant number of highly qualified and specialized people, making it an appropriate sector for our study. A huge number of journal and online publications were examined in order to perform this investigation. A questionnaire was then prepared in order to conduct a survey. Our results show a robust relationship between long-term human resource management practices and greater levels of employee productivity. Several more

research have found the same thing. Because sustainability is presently understudied in Pakistan, this study adds to the body of knowledge on sustainable human resource management. Human resource management at COVID-19 may be improved by using long-term HR strategies.

5.1 Managerial Implications

Organizations must embrace features of Sustainable HRM such as employee care, work flexibility, employee collaboration, and training in order to improve employee performance. Employee productivity may be increased by implementing long-term human resource initiatives, according to this study.

Managers must focus on their employees' health and safety in order to maintain a healthy and productive workforce. Reduce conflict and increase productivity by building a mutually beneficial relationship between employees and management via participatory decision-making, consultation, and education. Flexible working hours and 'work-from-home' choices may also aid workers in maintaining a good work-life balance, therefore managers should allow employees to create their own schedules and pick how many and what kind of working hours they have. As a consequence of this improvement, employee productivity and loyalty will both increase (Choo et al., 2016). Managers must pay attention to employee training as well. These initiatives not only encourage business success via improved employee performance, but they also help people grow personally.

People are more inclined to help an organization flourish if they perceive the company is caring for them, establishing a cooperative work atmosphere, offering schedule alternatives, and providing educational opportunities for them. A global pandemic, such as the one caused by the COVID virus, emphasizes the need of using long-term human resource management practices, such as employee care, workplace flexibility, collaboration, and training, to keep workers engaged and productive.

These long-term HRM components enabled the Sialkot banks to make a smooth transition to new ways of doing business. The superb COVID-19 safety procedures put in place by management helped employees feel safe and comfortable at work. Second, employees were allowed to do

their job according to their own schedules and conveniences throughout the outbreak, which was a time of great uncertainty. As COVID-19 introduced new challenges to businesses in the form of

virtual teams, monitoring employee performance, and working from home, firms needed excellent employee cooperation to provide inventive and timely solutions. Because most workers had little previous experience to the internet or remote work, training became more crucial as organizations implemented new working patterns.

This means that during COVID-19, it is feasible to enhance employee performance by preserving workers' health and safety, offering flexible work hours, and fostering collaboration among them.

5.2 Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

This is the first time in Sialkot that a quantitative study has been done in the context of sustainable human resource management. An exhaustive review of academic publications, research papers, and articles was undertaken in tandem with a survey to investigate the relationship between employee performance and long-term human resource management.

Nonetheless, since this is the first study in Sialkot, it has a few shortcomings that may be rectified in future investigations. Because of the COVID-19 epidemic, which made it impossible to visit numerous banks, there were only 103 participants in this research. This indicates that larger sample sizes may be used in future investigations. There are many other components of sustainable human resource management that may be taken into account to examine how they effect employee performance, such as employee empowerment, in the future. It would be intriguing to compare normal HR approaches with Sustainable HR practices and observe how they effect employee performance. As a result, the conclusions of this study cannot be extended to other industries in Sialkot. The results and application of the study may be evaluated in other industries and sectors of the city in future studies.

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