



**Talent Management and Organizational Performance in Higher Education: Mediating Roles of Employees' Resilience and Organizational Culture**

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**ABSTRACT**

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This article examines the impact of talent management on organizational performance in public sector higher education institutions in the southern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It particularly considers whether employees' resilience and organizational culture mediate the relationship between talent management practices and organizational performance. The article is extracted and condensed from a doctoral thesis that investigated talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement and talent retention as major dimensions of talent management. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used. The population comprised teachers working in higher education institutions in the selected region. A total of 287 questionnaires were distributed and 266 valid responses were analyzed. The instrument measured seven constructs: talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement, talent retention, employees' resilience, organizational culture and organizational performance, using five-point Likert scale items adapted from prior research. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, Hayes process mediation analysis and group difference tests. The results show that all talent management dimensions are positively associated with organizational performance. The regression model explained 52.9% of the variance in organizational performance. Talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement, talent retention, employees' resilience and organizational culture each demonstrated significant positive effects.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Higher education institutions operate in a complex environment where academic quality, research output, student satisfaction, institutional reputation and administrative efficiency depend largely on the capability and commitment of their human resources. Universities and colleges cannot achieve sustainable performance through physical infrastructure alone. Their real strength lies in the quality of faculty members, academic leaders and support staff who design learning experiences, supervise research, manage students and carry the institutional mission into practice. For this reason, talent management has become a central concern for higher education leaders and human resource professionals.

Talent management refers to the systematic attraction, development, engagement and retention of employees who can contribute to organizational goals. In strategic human resource management, talent is treated as a valuable organizational asset because skilled employees help institutions achieve innovation, stability and competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Prior studies show that effective talent management is associated with stronger organizational outcomes, including employee commitment, productivity, innovation and service quality (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Mishra, 2022; Sen et al., 2023). In higher education, this relationship is especially important because the work of teachers directly influences classroom effectiveness, research quality, student outcomes and public trust in the institution (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Saima et al., 2022).

The present article focuses on four dimensions of talent management. Talent acquisition concerns how institutions identify and recruit competent people who fit the mission and culture of the organization. Talent development refers to training, career development, mentoring and learning opportunities that enhance employee capability. Talent engagement reflects the degree to which employees are emotionally and professionally involved in institutional work. Talent retention includes the policies and practices that encourage valuable employees to remain with the institution. These dimensions are interrelated: recruitment brings capable people into the system, development strengthens their competencies, engagement motivates them to contribute and retention preserves institutional knowledge over time (Asrar et al., 2018; Babu et al., 2022; Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Although the direct link between talent management and performance has received considerable scholarly attention, the mechanism through which talent management improves performance requires further explanation. Two mediating factors are particularly relevant: employees' resilience and organizational culture. Employees' resilience refers to the ability of individuals to adapt to difficulties, recover from pressure, maintain focus and continue performing during uncertainty. Resilient employees are better able to handle technological changes, policy shifts, workload pressures and crises that commonly affect modern higher education institutions (Cooper et al., 2014; Santoro et al., 2021). Organizational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, routines and behavioral norms that shape how employees collaborate and respond to institutional goals. A supportive culture can turn talent management practices into meaningful performance outcomes by creating an environment where people feel valued, guided and

empowered (Dalahmeh & Dajnoki, 2020; Uddin et al., 2013).

This study was conducted in public sector higher education institutions in the southern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The context is important because developing regions often face distinctive challenges, including limited resources, increasing student expectations, pressure for research productivity, technological change and the need to retain qualified academics. Institutions in such contexts must use their human resources strategically if they are to maintain quality and compete in a rapidly changing educational landscape. By focusing on teachers in higher education, the study provides empirical evidence from a sector in which human capital is central to institutional performance.

The core problem addressed in this article is whether talent management practices improve organizational performance and whether employees' resilience and organizational culture explain part of this relationship. The article therefore pursues five interrelated objectives: to develop a framework linking talent management with performance, resilience and culture; to examine correlations among the variables; to test the direct effects of talent management dimensions on organizational performance; to assess the mediating roles of resilience and culture; and to examine whether demographic groups differ in their views about the study variables.

The contribution of the article is twofold. Theoretically, it integrates talent management, resilience and organizational culture into a single explanatory model of performance in higher education. Practically, it offers guidance for institutional leaders who want to improve performance through evidence-based human resource practices. The findings indicate that higher education institutions should not treat talent management as a narrow recruitment activity. Instead, it should be seen as a comprehensive strategy that develops people, strengthens resilience, supports culture and ultimately improves institutional performance.

## **2.0 Literature review**

Talent management has evolved from a routine personnel function into a strategic organizational process. Earlier human resource practices often focused on administrative tasks such as hiring, payroll and compliance. Contemporary talent management, however, emphasizes the identification of critical positions, the development of talented employees and the alignment of human capabilities with organizational strategy (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Gallardo et al., 2015). In this view, organizations gain advantage when they place the right people in the right roles, support their development and retain those who have the capacity to contribute to long-term success.

The literature consistently links talent management with organizational performance. Talent management can improve performance by ensuring that employees possess the required competencies, remain motivated and contribute to strategic goals. Empirical and conceptual studies have reported that organizations with stronger talent management systems often achieve better productivity, innovation, employee engagement and sustainable performance (Aina & Atan, 2020; Almaaitah et al., 2020; Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Sen et al., 2023). In education, the same logic applies to teaching quality, research productivity, administrative effectiveness and institutional reputation. Institutions that recruit qualified faculty, invest in professional

development and create supportive work environments are more likely to achieve strong academic and organizational outcomes (Bagorogoza & Nakasule, 2022; Saima et al., 2022).

Talent acquisition is the first major dimension of talent management. It refers to the process of attracting, screening and selecting individuals whose competencies match institutional needs. In higher education, acquisition is not limited to filling vacant teaching positions. It also includes identifying faculty who can contribute to research, curriculum development, academic leadership and student mentoring. Effective acquisition practices enhance performance because they bring new knowledge, teaching capacity and leadership potential into the institution (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Matongolo et al., 2018). Poor acquisition, by contrast, may lead to weak cultural fit, low commitment and higher turnover.

Talent development is the second dimension. It includes training, professional development, mentoring, leadership preparation, research support and career planning. Higher education institutions require continuous development because academic work changes with new technologies, pedagogical methods, assessment systems and research expectations. Development opportunities improve individual capability and also signal that the institution values its employees. Studies on talent development emphasize that learning and career growth enhance employee competence, commitment and readiness for future challenges (Garavan et al., 2012; Janna et al., 2021). When faculty members receive structured development, they are better prepared to innovate in teaching, publish research, supervise students and participate in institutional governance.

Talent engagement is the third dimension. Engagement represents the psychological and behavioral involvement of employees in their work and organization. Engaged employees show enthusiasm, commitment and willingness to contribute beyond minimum job requirements. In higher education, engaged faculty members are more likely to mentor students, participate in departmental activities, improve curricula, collaborate with colleagues and support institutional change. Prior studies have linked employee engagement with organizational performance and knowledge sharing, especially in challenging environments (Ahmed et al., 2020). Talent management practices can strengthen engagement by recognizing employee contributions, providing autonomy and creating meaningful career pathways (Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Talent retention is the fourth dimension. Retention refers to the policies and practices that encourage valued employees to remain with the institution. Retention is critical because the loss of qualified faculty can interrupt academic programs, weaken research continuity and increase recruitment costs. Retention depends on several factors, including fair compensation, career progression, recognition, supportive leadership, work-life balance and a positive work environment. Studies indicate that retention is associated with loyalty, motivation and continuity, all of which influence organizational performance (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Matongolo et al., 2018). In higher education, retention also preserves institutional memory, mentoring capacity and long-term academic networks.

Employees' resilience provides an important theoretical bridge between talent management and organizational performance. Resilience allows employees to cope with stress,

adapt to change and sustain performance under pressure. The higher education sector increasingly requires resilience because faculty members face heavy workloads, technology-driven teaching, research expectations, student diversity and policy reforms. Resilient employees are more likely to recover from setbacks, maintain professional motivation and contribute positively to institutional goals (Cooper et al., 2014; Santoro et al., 2021). Talent management can build resilience by offering training, career development, psychological support, mentoring and opportunities for growth (Janna et al., 2021).

Resilience is not only an individual trait; it can also be developed through organizational practices. When employees are given resources, learning opportunities and supportive leadership, they are better equipped to respond to difficulties. A resilient faculty can manage crises such as pandemics, financial pressures or sudden shifts to online learning without severe decline in performance. Literature on resilience suggests that resilient employees contribute to well-being, reduced burnout, innovation and organizational adaptability (Cooper et al., 2014; Kuntz et al., 2017). Therefore, resilience may partially explain why talent management improves performance: talent practices build employee capacity to handle challenges, and that capacity translates into better outcomes.

Organizational culture is another mechanism that links talent management with performance. Culture includes shared values, assumptions, rituals, communication norms and expectations that guide employee behavior. A constructive organizational culture can create a sense of belonging, trust and purpose, while a weak or negative culture may reduce motivation and cooperation. Prior research shows that culture affects employee performance, productivity and organizational effectiveness (Ehtesham & Shakil, 2011; Gregory et al., 2009; Uddin et al., 2013). In higher education, culture influences academic freedom, collaboration, research climate, leadership behavior and the extent to which faculty members align themselves with institutional goals (Folch & Ion, 2009; Najera et al., 2006).

Talent management and organizational culture are mutually reinforcing. Talent acquisition brings people into the institution who may strengthen or weaken existing culture. Talent development transmits institutional values and builds shared capabilities. Talent engagement encourages employees to internalize organizational goals, while retention preserves cultural continuity. Studies have argued that talent management practices can influence organizational culture and that culture can shape the effectiveness of talent management (Dalahmeh & Dajnoki, 2020). When the culture supports innovation, openness, fairness and professional growth, talent management is more likely to generate positive performance outcomes.

Organizational performance in higher education is multidimensional. It cannot be captured only through financial indicators. It includes teaching quality, research productivity, student success, institutional reputation, administrative efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction and the ability to adapt to environmental change. Performance management literature emphasizes both objective and subjective indicators because many important outcomes in education are qualitative, relational and long-term (Sunday et al., 2018; Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2014). In the present study, organizational performance was measured through faculty perceptions of institutional

effectiveness, clarity of goals, accountability, innovation, service quality and achievement of standards.

The literature therefore supports a model in which talent management dimensions affect organizational performance both directly and indirectly. Directly, talent acquisition, development, engagement and retention improve the quality and motivation of human resources. Indirectly, these practices develop resilient employees and shape a supportive culture, which then enhance performance. This model is consistent with strategic human resource management because it assumes that human resource practices create value through employee attitudes, capabilities and contextual conditions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

Based on the literature, the study tested hypotheses regarding significant associations among the variables, significant effects of talent management dimensions and mediators on organizational performance, mediation by employees' resilience, mediation by organizational culture and demographic group differences. The most important expectation was that resilience and culture would partially mediate the relationship between talent management and organizational performance, meaning that talent management would retain a direct effect while also working through these two explanatory pathways.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The study adopted a positivist, quantitative and cross-sectional research design. This design was appropriate because the objective was to test hypothesized relationships among measurable constructs and to determine the extent to which talent management dimensions, employees' resilience and organizational culture explain organizational performance. The deductive approach guided the study: relationships were first developed from theory and literature, and then tested through statistical procedures using survey data.

The target population consisted of teachers working in public sector higher education institutions located in the southern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. According to the thesis, the population frame comprised 1,020 teachers from five higher education institutions in the selected region. The sample-size calculation produced a required sample of 287. To reach this sample, 287 questionnaires were distributed among teachers. A total of 266 usable questionnaires were returned and included in the final analysis, producing an effective response rate of approximately 92.7%. The analysed sample size reported in the results tables was therefore  $N = 266$ .

A simple random sampling approach was used so that participants from different departments and designations could be represented. The respondents included lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors. This representation was important because perceptions of talent management, resilience, culture and performance may vary across academic rank, qualification, gender and marital status. The demographic part of the questionnaire gathered information on age, gender, designation, qualification and marital status.

The data collection instrument was an adapted questionnaire structured into eight parts. The first part measured demographic information. The remaining parts measured talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement, talent retention, employees' resilience,

organizational culture and organizational performance. Each construct was measured with ten items, making a total of seventy substantive items. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. The talent management dimensions were adapted from prior work on talent management, while resilience, culture and performance scales were adopted from relevant literature and assessed for applicability in the present context.

Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed for clarity and relevance. The thesis also indicates that a pilot process was used to ensure the suitability of wording, structure and length. Reliability was then assessed through Cronbach's alpha during the main analysis. All constructs exceeded the commonly accepted threshold for internal consistency, indicating that the instrument was reliable for measuring the study variables in this context.

Primary data were collected directly from teachers through self-administered questionnaires. Secondary data were used to support the conceptual and theoretical parts of the study, including academic articles, books, reports, theses and online databases. Ethical considerations were observed by maintaining confidentiality, requesting voluntary participation and using the data only for academic purposes. Respondents were not required to provide personal identifying information, and data were analysed in aggregate form.

Data analysis followed both descriptive and inferential procedures. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent demographics and the central tendency of study variables. Reliability analysis was conducted through Cronbach's alpha. Pearson correlation was used to examine associations among the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the joint impact of talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement, talent retention, employees' resilience and organizational culture on organizational performance. Mediation analysis was conducted through the Hayes Process approach to examine whether employees' resilience and organizational culture mediated the relationship between each talent management dimension and organizational performance.

Group difference tests were also performed to examine whether respondents differed in their perceptions on the basis of age, gender, designation, qualification and marital status. These tests were included because demographic characteristics can sometimes shape perceptions of organizational practices. The overall analytical strategy therefore allowed the study to test direct relationships, indirect relationships and demographic comparisons in a systematic way.

## **Results**

The demographic profile shows that the majority of respondents were between 20 and 35 years of age. Out of 266 respondents, 170 respondents (63.9%) were in the 20-35 age category, while 96 respondents (36.1%) were above 35 years. In terms of gender, 190 respondents (71.4%) were male and 76 respondents (28.6%) were female. The sample included 99 lecturers (37.2%), 72 assistant professors (27.1%), 50 associate professors (18.8%) and 45 professors (16.9%). In terms of qualification, 167 respondents (62.8%) had MPhil qualifications and 99 respondents (37.2%) had PhD qualifications. Most respondents were married (78.6%), while 21.4% were unmarried. The profile indicates a broad academic sample across age, designation and qualification categories.

**Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 266)**

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	20-35 years	170	63.9
Age	Above 35 years	96	36.1
Gender	Male	190	71.4
Gender	Female	76	28.6
Designation	Lecturer	99	37.2
Designation	Assistant Professor	72	27.1
Designation	Associate Professor	50	18.8
Designation	Professor	45	16.9
Qualification	MPhil	167	62.8
Qualification	PhD	99	37.2
Marital status	Married	209	78.6
Marital status	Unmarried	57	21.4

Descriptive statistics show that respondents generally reported moderate-to-positive perceptions of the study variables. Talent engagement recorded the highest mean score ( $M = 3.4049$ ), followed closely by employees’ resilience ( $M = 3.4004$ ) and organizational performance ( $M = 3.3507$ ). Talent acquisition recorded a mean of 3.2301, organizational culture 3.2558, talent retention 3.1912 and talent development 3.1091. These results suggest that respondents perceived their institutions as moderately active in managing talent, supporting resilience and maintaining performance.

The reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the measurement instrument. Cronbach’s alpha values were above acceptable thresholds for all constructs. Talent acquisition produced the highest reliability value ( $\alpha = .848$ ), followed by employees’ resilience ( $\alpha = .844$ ), talent development ( $\alpha = .824$ ), talent retention ( $\alpha = .802$ ), organizational culture ( $\alpha = .799$ ), talent engagement ( $\alpha = .788$ ) and organizational performance ( $\alpha = .704$ ). The overall instrument reliability was .902, indicating strong consistency across the seventy substantive items.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics and reliability**

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha
Talent acquisition	3.2301	.77524	.848
Talent development	3.1091	.82102	.824

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Talent engagement	3.4049	.64229	.788
Talent retention	3.1912	.82581	.802
Employees' resilience	3.4004	.68231	.844
Organizational culture	3.2558	.69190	.799
Organizational performance	3.3507	.62286	.704
Overall instrument	-	-	.902

Pearson correlation analysis supported the first hypothesis by showing positive and significant associations between the independent variables, mediators and organizational performance. Organizational performance correlated most strongly with talent acquisition ( $r = .645, p < .001$ ), followed by talent engagement ( $r = .555, p < .001$ ), employees' resilience ( $r = .505, p < .001$ ), talent development ( $r = .444, p < .001$ ), talent retention ( $r = .392, p < .001$ ) and organizational culture ( $r = .369, p < .001$ ). These results indicate that stronger talent management practices, higher resilience and a more positive culture are each associated with better perceived organizational performance.

The intercorrelations also demonstrate that the talent management dimensions are connected with the mediators. Talent acquisition showed significant correlations with employees' resilience and organizational culture. Talent engagement was also strongly related to resilience and culture. Talent retention correlated significantly with organizational culture and organizational performance, while its bivariate association with resilience was comparatively weaker. Overall, the correlation matrix provided initial evidence for the mediation model because the predictors were related to the mediators and the outcome.

**Table 3. Correlations with organizational performance**

Variable	Pearson r	p-value
Talent acquisition	.645	.000
Talent development	.444	.000
Talent engagement	.555	.000
Talent retention	.392	.000
Employees' resilience	.505	.000
Organizational culture	.369	.000

Multiple regression analysis was conducted with organizational performance as the dependent variable and talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement, talent retention, employees' resilience and organizational culture as predictors. The model was statistically significant,  $F(6,$

259) = 48.519,  $p < .001$ , and explained 52.9% of the variance in organizational performance ( $R = .727$ ,  $R^2 = .529$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .518$ ). This level of explained variance indicates that the combined set of talent management variables and mediators provides a substantial explanation of organizational performance in the selected higher education institutions.

The regression coefficients show that all predictors had significant positive effects on organizational performance. Talent acquisition was the strongest predictor ( $B = .274$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by employees' resilience ( $B = .202$ ,  $p < .001$ ), talent engagement ( $B = .201$ ,  $p < .001$ ), talent retention ( $B = .174$ ,  $p = .046$ ), organizational culture ( $B = .173$ ,  $p = .035$ ) and talent development ( $B = .144$ ,  $p = .022$ ). These findings support the hypothesis that talent management dimensions and the two mediators significantly influence organizational performance.

**Table 4. Multiple regression predicting organizational performance**

Predictor / Statistic	B / Model value	p-value
Model summary	$R = .727$ ; $R^2 = .529$ ; Adjusted $R^2 = .518$ ; $F = 48.519$ ; $p < .001$	
Talent acquisition	.274	.000
Talent development	.144	.022
Talent engagement	.201	.000
Talent retention	.174	.046
Employees' resilience	.202	.000
Organizational culture	.173	.035

Mediation analysis was conducted to test the mediating role of employees' resilience between each talent management dimension and organizational performance. The results showed partial mediation for talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement and talent retention. For talent acquisition, the direct effect on organizational performance decreased from  $B = .5183$  to  $B = .4209$  when employees' resilience was included, while resilience remained significant ( $B = .2465$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For talent development, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .2343$  to  $B = .1633$ , with resilience significant ( $B = .4372$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For talent engagement, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .5379$  to  $B = .3943$ , with resilience significant ( $B = .2854$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For talent retention, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .3076$  to  $B = .2639$ , with resilience significant ( $B = .4244$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These patterns indicate that resilience explains part, but not all, of the effect of talent management on performance.

The second mediation analysis examined organizational culture as mediator. Organizational culture partially mediated the relationship between all four talent management dimensions and organizational performance. For talent acquisition, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .5183$  to  $B = .4775$  when culture was included, and culture remained significant ( $B = .0969$ ,  $p = .0331$ ). For

talent development, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .2343$  to  $B = .1685$ , with culture significant ( $B = .2631$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For talent engagement, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .5379$  to  $B = .4731$ , with culture significant ( $B = .1755$ ,  $p = .0002$ ). For talent retention, the direct effect decreased from  $B = .3076$  to  $B = .2393$ , with culture significant ( $B = .2143$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results therefore show that a supportive culture is an important channel through which talent management improves institutional performance.

**Table 5. Summary of mediation results**

Predictor	Mediator	a path B	mediator B	total effect c	direct effect c'	Decision
Talent acquisition	Employees' resilience	.3952	.2465	.5183	.4209	Partial mediation
Talent development	Employees' resilience	.1625	.4372	.2343	.1633	Partial mediation
Talent engagement	Employees' resilience	.5033	.2854	.5379	.3943	Partial mediation
Talent retention	Employees' resilience	.1030	.4244	.3076	.2639	Partial mediation
Talent acquisition	Organizational culture	.4213	.0969	.5183	.4775	Partial mediation
Talent development	Organizational culture	.2501	.2631	.2343	.1685	Partial mediation
Talent engagement	Organizational culture	.3695	.1755	.5379	.4731	Partial mediation
Talent retention	Organizational culture	.3188	.2143	.3076	.2393	Partial mediation

Group difference tests were used to examine whether perceptions differed by demographic characteristics. The results were largely nonsignificant for age, gender, designation and qualification, meaning that respondents generally reported similar views across these groups. The marital status table showed a significant difference for organizational culture ( $p = .022$ ), with married respondents reporting a higher mean than unmarried respondents; however, other variables did not differ significantly by marital status. In general, the findings suggest that the main relationships among talent management, resilience, culture and performance are not strongly dependent on demographic group membership.

### **5.0 Discussion**

The results provide strong support for the central argument that talent management improves organizational performance in higher education institutions. The positive correlations and significant regression coefficients indicate that institutions with better acquisition,

development, engagement and retention practices tend to report higher performance. This finding is consistent with prior research that treats talent management as a strategic human resource system capable of improving organizational effectiveness (Aina & Atan, 2020; Almaaitah et al., 2020; Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Sen et al., 2023). In the higher education context, these practices translate into better faculty capability, stronger motivation, continuity of academic work and stronger alignment with institutional goals.

Talent acquisition emerged as the strongest predictor of organizational performance in both correlation and regression analysis. This result suggests that recruiting competent faculty and staff remains a foundational requirement for performance. In higher education, the quality of teaching, research and academic leadership depends heavily on the people selected into the institution. When recruitment systems identify individuals with the right academic skills, professional values and cultural fit, the institution is more likely to achieve high-quality outcomes. The finding aligns with the view that talent acquisition should be strategic rather than merely administrative (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Matongolo et al., 2018).

Talent development also had a significant positive effect on organizational performance. Although its regression coefficient was smaller than that of acquisition and engagement, development remains essential because higher education work requires constant updating of skills. Faculty members need development in pedagogy, research methods, digital teaching, leadership, supervision and community engagement. Development also strengthens employees' confidence and adaptive capacity. The mediation results show that development improves performance partly by building resilience and organizational culture. This means that training and career development are not only technical activities; they also create psychological and cultural resources that help institutions perform better (Garavan et al., 2012; Janna et al., 2021).

Talent engagement showed a strong association with organizational performance and demonstrated important indirect effects through both resilience and culture. This finding is expected because engaged faculty members are more likely to contribute to teaching improvement, student guidance, research collaboration and institutional problem solving. Engagement also promotes persistence during difficult periods. When employees feel connected to their institution, they are more willing to invest energy in improvement and remain committed to shared goals. Prior literature similarly links engagement with knowledge sharing and organizational performance (Ahmed et al., 2020; Pandita & Ray, 2018).

Talent retention had a significant positive effect on organizational performance, although some of its relationships with resilience were comparatively weaker. Retention is nevertheless important in higher education because academic performance is cumulative. Institutions benefit from experienced faculty who understand programs, students, research networks and institutional procedures. Losing capable employees creates disruption, recruitment costs and loss of institutional knowledge. The mediation through organizational culture also indicates that retention practices help performance when they create a stable, supportive and trust-based environment. This supports the argument that retention is not merely about preventing turnover; it is about preserving competence and commitment (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Matongolo et al., 2018).

Employees' resilience played a significant mediating role in all four talent management-performance relationships. This confirms that talent management improves performance partly because it strengthens employees' capacity to manage stress, uncertainty and change. In higher education, resilience is especially valuable because teachers face pressures from curriculum reforms, technology adoption, research requirements, student diversity and administrative responsibilities. Resilient employees are more likely to maintain performance during disruption and to convert challenges into opportunities for learning. The results support studies that link resilience with employee well-being, adaptability and performance (Cooper et al., 2014; Kuntz et al., 2017; Santoro et al., 2021).

Organizational culture also partially mediated all relationships between talent management and organizational performance. This finding demonstrates that talent practices generate stronger performance when they are embedded in a culture of support, collaboration, fairness, innovation and shared purpose. A positive academic culture allows recruitment, development, engagement and retention practices to produce greater benefits because employees can apply their skills in an encouraging environment. If culture is weak or misaligned, talent management may not translate fully into performance. The finding is consistent with studies showing that culture influences employee productivity, institutional effectiveness and performance management (Dalahmeh & Dajnoki, 2020; Ehtesham & Shakil, 2011; Gregory et al., 2009; Uddin et al., 2013).

The partial mediation pattern is theoretically meaningful. It indicates that talent management has direct effects on performance and also indirect effects through resilience and culture. In practical terms, this means that higher education leaders should avoid treating talent management, employee well-being and culture-building as separate agendas. Recruitment, training, engagement and retention strategies should be designed to strengthen resilience and reinforce constructive cultural values. For example, faculty development can include resilience training, mentoring and leadership preparation. Retention policies can include recognition, workload balance and psychological support. Engagement practices can promote participation in decision making and collaborative problem solving.

The demographic findings suggest that perceptions of talent management and performance were relatively consistent across most respondent groups. This consistency strengthens the general interpretation of the model within the sampled institutions because the relationships were not limited to one age, gender, qualification or designation group. The one notable difference concerned organizational culture by marital status, which may require further investigation. Future studies may explore whether work-family responsibilities, seniority or institutional experience influence how employees perceive culture.

Overall, the discussion confirms that organizational performance in higher education is a human-centered phenomenon. Buildings, policies and technologies matter, but they are activated by people. Institutions that want to improve performance must therefore invest in comprehensive talent management systems that attract capable people, develop their abilities, engage their commitment, retain their knowledge, strengthen their resilience and cultivate a culture in which talent can flourish.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

This article concludes that talent management has a significant positive influence on organizational performance in public sector higher education institutions in the southern region of KP, Pakistan. All four talent management dimensions - talent acquisition, talent development, talent engagement and talent retention - were positively related to organizational performance. The combined regression model explained more than half of the variance in performance, demonstrating the practical importance of human resource practices in the higher education sector.

Employees' resilience and organizational culture were confirmed as partial mediators. This means that talent management improves performance not only by directly strengthening human resource capacity but also by building employees who can adapt to pressure and by creating a supportive institutional culture. Resilience helps faculty members manage stress, recover from setbacks and remain productive during change. Organizational culture provides the shared values and supportive environment through which talent can be converted into institutional outcomes.

The practical implication is that higher education institutions should design integrated talent management strategies. Recruitment should focus on both competence and cultural fit. Development programs should include technical, pedagogical, leadership and resilience-building components. Engagement should be increased through recognition, autonomy, participation and communication. Retention should be supported through fair rewards, career pathways, mentoring, workload balance and employee well-being initiatives. Leadership development should also emphasize cultural competence and adaptive leadership.

The study contributes to literature by integrating talent management, employees' resilience and organizational culture in a single performance model. It also contributes evidence from the Pakistani higher education context, where talent management research remains less developed than in Western or corporate settings. Future research may apply the same model in other sectors, conduct longitudinal analysis, examine leadership styles as moderators and explore the role of digital human resource technologies in strengthening talent management outcomes.

The main limitation is that the study used cross-sectional survey data from one region and one sector. Therefore, causal interpretations should be made carefully, and generalization to other contexts should be tested through additional research. Despite this limitation, the findings offer useful guidance for institutions seeking to improve performance through people-centered strategies. The central message is clear: organizational performance in higher education can be strengthened when talent management is connected with resilience-building and culture-building practices.

### Contribution

**Umer Nooh Wazir:** Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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