



HR STRATEGIC APPROACHES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN ACHIEVING OPTIMAL PERSON-JOB FIT

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Abstract

This study examines the role of strategic Human Resource Development (HRD) in enhancing Person–Job (P–J) fit in public sector higher education institutions. Drawing on Person–Environment Fit Theory and Social Exchange Theory, this study develops a theoretical framework linking strategic HRD interventions to optimal Person–Job Fit. This paper synthesizes evidence from 14 empirical studies (published between 1991 and 2025) and identifies major gaps between the traditional method of selection among civil servants and the changing academic qualifications. The study proposes the primary dimensions of P–J fit as Demand–Ability Fit and Supply–Value Fit, develops five theoretically derived propositions for future empirical validation on the effectiveness of HRD, and pinpoints institutional culture, public sector bureaucracy and digital literacy as key moderating factors. The review identified that training, mentorship, and developmental feedback consistently improve Demand–Ability and Supply–Value Fit. This study synthesizes HRD–P–J fit relationships in public HEIs, highlighting bureaucratic constraints and integrating Person–Environment Fit and Social Exchange Theory. The practical implications derived from the reviewed evidence and include guidelines for modernizing tenure-track requirements and the establishment of continuous professional development in resource-limited public institutions. The review indicates that despite the presence of a rigid structure of bureaucracy, systematic HRD programmes can help reduce competency gaps and increasing the fit between competence and Demand–Ability as well as Supply–Value.

Keywords: Strategic HRM, HRD, Public Sector HEIs, Person–Job Fit, Academic Talent Management

1. Introduction

1.1 Contextual Background

Public universities worldwide have undergone significant transformation from administratively oriented institutions to increasingly competitive and performance-driven organizations (Ermiş et al., 2021). This has necessitated a strategic rethinking of HRM in such organizations. Public universities must balance bureaucratic accountability with organizational responsiveness, so that they can respond to the rapid changes of technology, student demographics, and global competition in higher education in the modern era. The alignment between employee competencies and institutional requirements has become a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness.

Person–Job (P–J) fit has been a popular topic in organizational studies as a determinant of employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Edwards, J. R., 1991;



Kristof, 1996). The importance of P-J fit is particularly significant in the field of higher education, where academic staff are required to deliver quality teaching services and also produce scientific output in order to strengthen the position of their institutions, as it is a twofold burden (Ermiş et al., 2021). Public sector higher education institutions have a distinct set of challenges in achieving their highest level of P-J fit due to a number of factors related to the structure of civil service, which often is not aligned with the needs of dynamic academic work.

Globally, higher education institutions are experiencing significant transformation driven by digitalization, international competition, changing student expectations, and evolving workforce requirements. According to UNESCO, higher education systems increasingly face pressure to improve quality, efficiency, and responsiveness while operating under constrained public resources. Public universities are particularly challenged to develop academic talent capable of adapting to technological change, online learning environments, and research productivity demands. Consequently, strategic human resource development has become a critical mechanism for ensuring that academic staff competencies remain aligned with institutional needs.

1.2 The Research Problem

Despite the increased recognition of the role of P-J fit, in practice public sector HEIs are still working with a competency gap as existing civil service recruitment practices do not adequately reflect the academic and research-based demands for recruitment. This gap can be expressed in many different ways: often the credentials of recruits are more in line with the needs of the bureaucracy than they are with the needs of teaching and research; the job descriptions themselves have remained the same, while those of academic positions are changing very quickly; and the structure of employment in the public sector is not flexible enough to respond to the adaptive talent required (Mohanraj, P, 2025).

This challenge is intensified by the continuous need to update academic knowledge and skills. Compared with private institutions, public HEIs often face bureaucratic constraints that limit flexibility in achieving optimal person-job fit. This paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on the role HRD interventions play in filling the competency gap within the state governance framework.

1.3 Research Questions

The study addresses two primary research questions:

1. What are the implications of strategic HRD interventions for P-J fit in public sector HEIs?
2. What are the unique challenges affecting P-J fit in public sector higher education institutions?

1.4 Theoretical Propositions

Based on the theoretical framework and research questions, this study proposes the following propositions:

- P1: Strategic HRD interventions (training programs, mentorship systems, performance feedback) have a positive effect on Demand-Ability fit in public sector HEIs.
- P2: Strategic HRD interventions have a positive impact on Supply-Value fit in HEIs of public sector.
- P3: In supportive (development) institutional cultures, the relationship between HRD interventions and P-J fit is stronger than in cultures that are unsupportive (development) to such interventions.
- P4: The relationship between HRD interventions and P-J fit is negatively moderated by public sector bureaucracy, in that the more extreme the level of bureaucracy, the less effective HRD is.
- P5: There is a mediating relationship between P-J fit and the organizational commitment outcomes through occupational well-being.
- P1/P2 relate to Demand-Ability and Supply-Value fit; P3/P4 examine moderating effects; P5 tests mediation via occupational well-being.

1.5 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to synthesize existing empirical evidence for creating a conceptual framework of strategic HRD and P-J fit in public sector HEIs. Specific aims are to:

1. To determine and discuss the essential components of P-J fit that are relevant to the academic environment of a public university;



2. To discuss how HRD practices relate to Demand-Ability fit and Supply-Value fit;
3. To assess the mediating variables that affect effective HRD delivery in the context of the public sector's bureaucratic settings; and
4. To identify policy proposals relying on evidence of institutional practice; and
5. To propose an integrated theoretical model based on Person-Environment Fit Theory and Social Exchange Theory.

1.6 Research Contribution

This study contributes to the literature in four important ways. First, it integrates Strategic Human Resource Development and Person–Job Fit into a unified conceptual framework specifically designed for public sector higher education institutions. Second, it extends Person–Environment Fit Theory by incorporating institutional culture, public sector bureaucracy, and digital literacy as contextual boundary conditions. Third, it synthesizes fragmented evidence from fourteen empirical studies into theoretically derived propositions that can guide future empirical research. Finally, it provides practical recommendations for university administrators and policymakers seeking to improve competency alignment through strategic HRD.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The framework for this study is based on two complementary theories: Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theory and Social Exchange Theory. P-E Fit Theory (Edwards, J. R, 1991; Kristof, 1996) suggests that employee well-being and performance depends on the fit between individual characteristics and environmental characteristics. Person-Job fit is one of these subdomains which focuses on the congruence between employee knowledge, skills, and abilities and job requirements, and the congruence between job resources and individual requirements (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

The relational mechanism that transforms HRD investments into employee attitudes and behaviours is provided in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, P, 2017; Homans, G. C, 1974). From this view, workers and organizations enter into reciprocal obligations to each other when the organization invests in the employee's development. Through training, mentoring, and feedback, institutions send signals of support that are interpreted by staff as support signals and in turn stimulate them to provide greater commitment, performance, and retention.

P-E Fit Theory offers a strong structure for the understanding of employee-environment alignment, but its neglect of power relationships found in public sector employment (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) is criticized. The theory is based on the assumption of voluntary employee mobility, which may not be applicable to civil service settings that provide some tenure security. In addition to this, Social Exchange Theory is able to shed light on how reciprocity mechanisms work, but the original formulation proposed by (Blau, P, 2017) has been questioned as a result of its underlying assumption of rational actor behavior which fails to account for the complexities of academic motivation (Afsar et al., 2019). The incorporation of these frameworks fills the theoretical voids of the previous studies on how HRD affects perceptions of fit structurally and relationally.

The integration of Person-Environment Fit Theory and Social Exchange Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of the proposed relationships. Person-Environment Fit Theory explains how alignment between employee capabilities and job requirements contributes to favorable work outcomes. Social Exchange Theory complements this perspective by explaining why employees respond positively when institutions invest in their professional development. Together, these theories suggest that HRD interventions improve employee capabilities while simultaneously strengthening reciprocal relationships between employees and institutions, thereby enhancing Person-Job Fit and organizational commitment.

2.2 Person-Job Fit in Academic Contexts

The concept of P-J fit in higher education is applied in several ways and is not limited to the context of jobs. Teaching, research and service responsibilities are required in academic positions and all three have unique qualities and skills that must be acquired simultaneously. Modern scholarship has pointed to digital



transformation adding to these fit dynamics. As digitalization is disrupting HRM in educational systems, new competencies are needed that are not reflected in standard job descriptions, as stated by (Nicoleta, M. I. H. O. C & Laura, M, 2025). In the same way, (Margaretha et al., 2026) report that person-organization fit is one of the vital factors impacting faculty retention, and the alignment of values creates a lower psychological pressure and improves psychological health in the academic environment.

In public HEIs, the difference between Demand-Ability Fit and Supply-Value Fit is especially important. Demand-Ability Fit is the equation of whether faculty have the pedagogical, research and technological skills needed by their institutions. Supply-Value Fit asks the question of whether the work gives academics the autonomy, intellectual stimulation and developmental opportunities they seek. In the context of academics, where intrinsic motivation is the norm, meaningful work is identified as a significant mediator between person-job fit and work engagement (Merdiaty, 2024).

2.3 Strategic HRD Interventions in Higher Education

Strategic HRD involves the implementation of systematic training, mentoring, and performance feedback systems that aim to improve the skills and knowledge of employees, helping them meet the organization's requirements. In higher education, these interventions need to respond to the three-fold mandate of teaching, research and service and have to respect the professional autonomy that has been long recognized within academia.

Training programs in public HEIs have shifted from general administrative workshops to specialized development programs for digital pedagogy and research methods, as well as the acquisition of skills for the development of grant proposals. In the article, (Meijerink et al., 2021) collate and comment on the literature across different disciplinary fields that addresses algorithmic and technology-mediated HR practices and how they are changing the way academic talent is developed in institutions. But such programs in public-sector settings are not evenly adopted and face budgetary restrictions and rules of the civil service that prevent flexible distribution of resources.

In the case of public HEIs, mentoring systems have special roles in helping junior academics deal with a complicated bureaucracy and at the same time build research pathways. Formal and informal guidance mechanisms indicate institutional investment in employee development, which can increase Supply-Value Fit by Social Exchange mechanisms. Feedback which focuses on development, not assessment, makes expectations clear and allows for ongoing enhancement of the skills of employees as job requirements change. Public sector constraints on HRM present significant challenges for the implementation of strategic HRD initiatives. Governance bodies are an important aspect of the governance systems under which public sector HEIs function, which have a significant impact on HRM possibilities. Private universities do not have the institutional rigidities of civil service regulations, tenure systems, and centralized budgeting. The (Bakos, 2025) model for HRM indicators in public administration points to a wide range of profiles in terms of education and career ladders in public sectors in member countries, together with potential deadlocks in career development where some specific types of employee are trapped in classification systems.

Bureaucratic constraints manifest in several forms: hiring based on degrees instead of skills; promotions based on rank instead of performance; and budget allocations that don't allow for agile decisions regarding new skill requirements. Career stage and professional development opportunities are cited as the two main factors shaping work-life balance in public HEIs by (Mohanraj, P, 2025), but they also highlight that issues in administration constrain flexible implementation of HRD initiatives. These constraints are as much structural boundary conditions that affect the 'strategic HRD effectiveness' as they are constraints that create operational difficulties.

2.4 Research Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on Person-Job Fit and Human Resource Development, several important gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on private organizations or higher education institutions in developed countries, limiting understanding of public sector HEIs operating under bureaucratic constraints (Ermiş et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2023). Second, research examining HRD and P-J fit after the rapid digital transformation of higher education remains limited. Third, previous studies generally examine

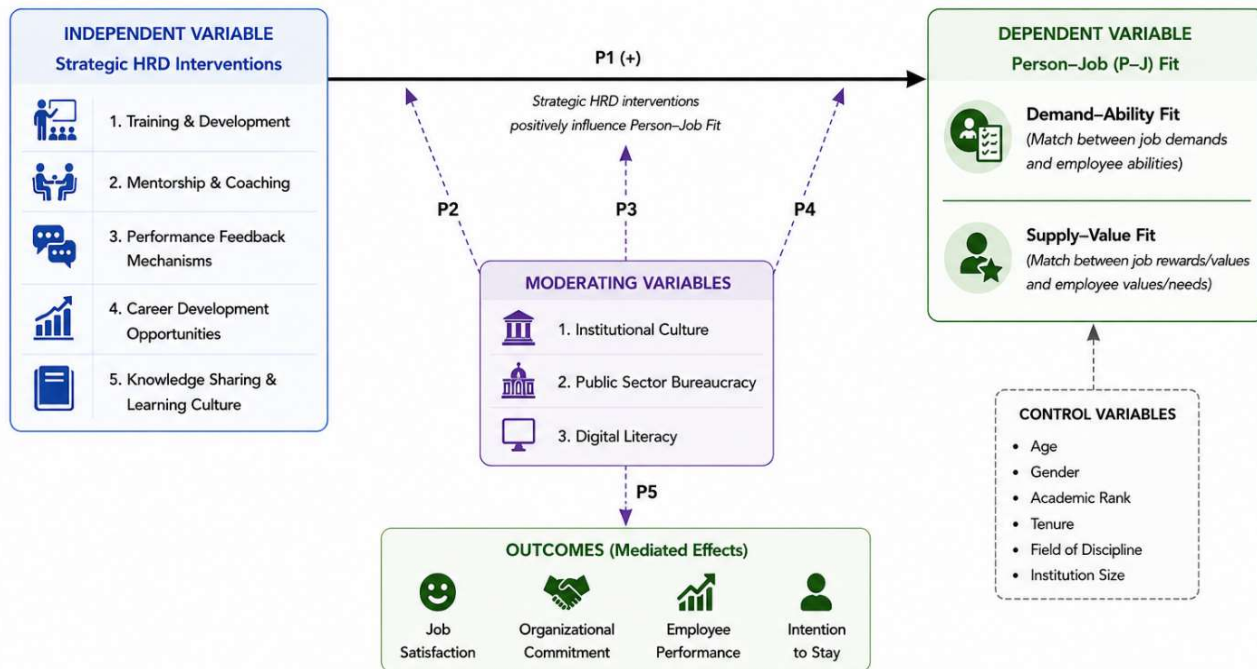


isolated relationships among HRD practices, job fit, and employee outcomes rather than integrating these constructs within a unified framework (Chuang et al., 2016). Finally, the role of digital literacy as a contextual factor influencing HRD effectiveness and P-J fit remains underexplored. Addressing these gaps provides the foundation for the present conceptual framework.

3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Model: Strategic HRD and Person-Job Fit in Public Sector Higher Education Institutions



The conceptual framework proposes that strategic HRD interventions enhance Person-Job Fit by improving employee competencies, knowledge, and professional capabilities. Occupational well-being is positioned as a mediating variable because employees who perceive stronger fit are more likely to experience positive psychological outcomes, which subsequently strengthen organizational commitment. Institutional culture and public sector bureaucracy are proposed as moderating variables because they influence the effectiveness with which HRD interventions can be implemented and translated into improved fit outcomes.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework Components and Theoretical Foundations

Variable Category	Specific Variables	Definition	Theoretical Basis	Expected Relationship
Independent Variables	Training Programs	Structured learning interventions for capability development	(Kirkpatrick, D & Kirkpatrick, J, 2006) Human Capital Theory	Positive effect on Demand-Ability fit (P1)
	Mentorship Systems	Formal/informal guidance for adaptation and advancement	Social Exchange Theory (Blau, P, 2017)	Positive effect on Supply-Value fit (P2)



Variable Category	Specific Variables	Definition	Theoretical Basis	Expected Relationship
Dependent Variables	Performance Feedback	Developmental evaluation systems	Feedback Intervention Theory	Moderates P-J fit by clarifying role expectations
	Demand-Ability Fit	Match between capabilities and job demands	(Edwards, J. R, 1991)	Primary outcome of HRD interventions
	Supply-Value Fit	Match between job supplies and personal needs	(Cable & DeRue, 2002)	Secondary outcome influenced by perceived organizational investment
Mediating Variables	Job Satisfaction	Affective response to job experiences	Social Exchange Theory	Mediates HRD to P-J fit relationship
	Occupational Well-being	Positive emotional experiences at work	Affective Theory of Social Exchange	Partial mediator between fit and commitment outcomes (P5)
Moderating Variables	Institutional Culture	Shared values and practices regarding development	Organizational culture theory	Strengthens HRD effectiveness when supportive (P3)
	Public Sector Bureaucracy	Degree of administrative constraint and rigidity	Public administration theory	Weakens HRD flexibility and responsiveness (P4)
	Digital Literacy	Technological competence and infrastructure	Technology acceptance model	Moderates effectiveness of technology-focused HRD

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The methodology of this study is Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach using the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The research is not an empirical study which gathers and analyzes primary data, but it is an attempt to synthesize existing empirical studies in order to create a conceptual framework and to formulate theoretically derived propositions for future empirical testing.

4.2 Systematic Review Protocol

The study selection followed PRISMA 2020 guidelines and systematic database searching procedures across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar.

Inclusion Criteria: The inclusion criteria for this review consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles published in the English language between 1991 and 2025. Only empirical studies focusing on higher education were considered eligible. These criteria were applied to ensure the quality, relevance, and academic rigor of the selected studies.

Exclusion Criteria: The exclusion criteria for this review included conference papers, editorials, and book reviews. Duplicate studies were also removed to avoid repetition of findings. In addition, papers published in languages other than English were excluded to maintain consistency and ensure accurate interpretation of the selected literature.

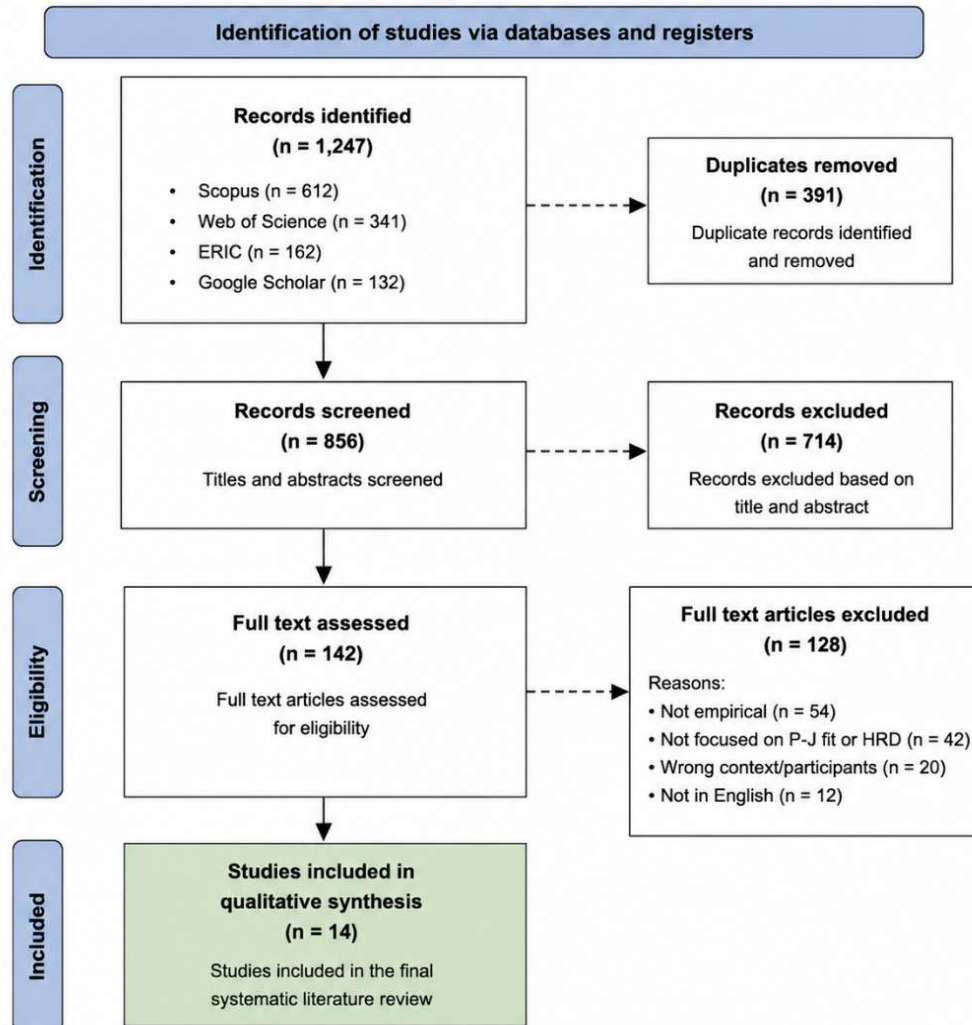
4.2.2 Study Selection Process. The selection process for the studies is shown in the PRISMA flow diagram. A preliminary examination of the databases resulted in 1247 entries. Duplicates were eliminated and



856 records were screened by the literature title and abstract. Fourteen studies were included in the final synthesis for review and synthesis from 142 full-text articles that were evaluated for eligibility.

Figure 2

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process



Although the initial search yielded 1,247 records, strict inclusion criteria focusing on empirical studies examining both HRD-related interventions and Person-Job Fit within higher education contexts substantially reduced the eligible sample. Many studies addressed either HRD or Person-Job Fit independently without examining their relationship. Others focused on private-sector organizations, non-educational settings, or lacked sufficient methodological rigor. Consequently, only 14 studies met all eligibility and quality assessment requirements for final synthesis.

**Table 2***Empirical Studies Included in the Systematic Literature Review*

Author(s)	Country	Research Context / Sample	Study Design	Theoretical Foundation	Key Findings
(Ermiş et al., 2021)	Turkey	403 university academics	Quantitative (Survey)	Person–Environment Fit Theory	Academic rank significantly influenced Person–Job Fit. Better competency alignment improved organizational fit and academic performance.
(Huang et al., 2023)	China	1,539 kindergarten teachers	Quantitative (SEM)	Person–Job Fit Theory; Social Exchange Theory	Occupational well-being partially mediated Person–Job Fit and occupational commitment. Perceived organizational support moderated the relationship.
(Tafese Keltu, 2024)	Ethiopia	312 university academic staff	Quantitative (SEM)	Human Resource Development	HRD significantly improved employee performance through job satisfaction.
(Mohanraj, P, 2025)	India	Employees in Higher Education Institutions	Quantitative	Strategic HRM	HRM practices improved work-life balance but bureaucratic structures constrained HRD implementation.
(Merdiaty, 2024)	Indonesia	Employees from multiple organizations	Quantitative	Person–Job Fit Theory	Meaningful work mediated the relationship between Person–Job Fit and work engagement.
(Margaretha et al., 2026)	Indonesia	University faculty members	Quantitative	Person–Organization Fit Theory	Workplace spirituality and organizational fit enhanced faculty engagement and retention.
(Afsar et al., 2019)	Pakistan	Organizational employees	Quantitative	Social Exchange Theory	Organizational investment strengthened employee commitment and HRD effectiveness through reciprocal relationships.
(Nicoleta, M. I. H. O. C & Laura, M, 2025)	Romania	Public and private educational institutions	Mixed/Pilot Study	Digital HRM	Digital transformation requires new competencies and expands the strategic role of HRD.
(Chuang et al., 2016)	Taiwan/ USA	Employees from multiple organizations	Quantitative (Scale Development & Validation)	Person–Environment Fit Theory	Developed the Perceived Person–Environment Fit Scale (PPEFS), providing a multidimensional instrument for measuring Person–Job Fit.
(Cable & DeRue, 2002)	USA	Employees across organizations	Quantitative	Person–Job Fit Theory	Distinguished Demand–Ability Fit and Supply–Value Fit, which form the theoretical basis for measuring Person–Job Fit.
(Kristof, 1996)	USA	Multiple organizational studies	Integrative Review	Person–Organization Fit Theory	Synthesized conceptualizations of fit and explained how employee–organization alignment affects organizational outcomes.



Author(s)	Country	Research Context / Sample	Study Design	Theoretical Foundation	Key Findings
(Meijerink et al., 2021)	Netherlands	Cross-sector organizations	Systematic Literature Review	Digital HRM	Demonstrated that digital HRM and algorithmic HR practices reshape employee development and competency management. Proposed competency-based HR indicators and highlighted structural barriers to workforce development in public organizations.
(Bakos, 2025)	OECD countries	Public administration systems	Comparative Policy Study	Public Sector HRM	Explained mechanisms linking work environments and employee outcomes, extending understanding of fit dynamics.
(Edwards & Rothbard, 2000)	USA	Organizational employees	Conceptual/Theoretical Analysis	Person–Environment Fit Theory	

4.3 Quality Assessment

Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal instruments for each type of study design were used to evaluate the methodological quality of the studies included. Studies were evaluated in terms of: (1) Clear research questions, (2) Appropriate research design, (3) Participant characteristics, (4) Valid and reliable measurement instruments, (5) Appropriate statistical analysis, and (6) Clear reporting of results. The above 14 studies included met the minimal quality criteria. “The SLR synthesizes secondary data; variability in instruments and context may limit generalizability.”

4.4. Data extraction and synthesis

A standardized data collection document was used to extract data including: study context, sample characteristics, HRD interventions examined, key findings, P-J fit dimensions measured, and statistical relationships. Thematic synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to look for themes in studies. Findings were categorized thematically and were not statistically aggregated because of the diversity of measurements and contexts.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Thematic Synthesis of HRD and P-J Fit Relationships

Theme 1: Training Interventions and Demand-Ability Fit. The synthesis of the studies of (Ermiş et al., 2021; Mohanraj, P, 2025; Tafese Keltu, 2024) suggests that there are clear positive relationships between structured training programs and perceived capability-job demands alignment. (Ermiş et al., 2021) based on 403 Turkish academics, found title to significantly affect the P-J perceptions of fit of academics: senior faculty members who are likely to have more opportunities for development reported higher Demand-Ability fit than their counterparts with lower academic rank. In a structural equation model conducted by (Tafese Keltu, 2024), the number of academics (N = 312) was found to have a direct relationship between training and development and employee performance, mediated by job satisfaction. The findings provide support for P1, suggesting that systematic training interventions improve the perceived alignment between employee capabilities and job demands.

Although the reviewed studies provide consistent evidence supporting the positive relationship between training interventions and Demand-Ability fit, most of the evidence is derived from single-country or single-institution studies, which may limit generalizability across different public higher education systems with varying governance structures.

Theme 2: Mentorship and Supply-Value Fit. Evidence suggests that developmental support mechanisms contribute to Supply-Value Fit by reinforcing employees’ perceptions of organizational investment. In (Huang et al., 2023) study with 1,539 Chinese education professionals, the perceived



organizational support (POS) moderated the relationship between P-J fit and job satisfaction with antagonistic effects at high levels of POS, indicating boundary conditions for P2.

overall, the evidence related to mentorship and organizational support is largely indirect and context-specific. For example, some studies focus on work-life balance rather than Person-Job Fit directly, while others are conducted in non-university settings, which may limit the direct applicability of findings to public sector higher education institutions.

Theme 3: Occupational well-being. (Huang et al., 2023) give solid support to the mediation pathway suggested in P5. They found that occupational well-being partially mediated the relationship between P-J fit and occupational commitment (indirect effect = 0.20, 95% CI [0.16, 0.24]). This result is consistent with the Social Exchange Theory predictions that affect states will be mediated by perceptions of fit and that these affect the commitment behaviors.

Theme 4: Bureaucratic Constraints as Boundary Conditions. Similar to P4, the rigidity of the bureaucracy emerged as a recurring obstacle to the effectiveness of HRD. Career stage and professional development opportunities were found to be major factors shaping work-life balance ($M = 3.52/5$), but public sector administrative restrictions made it difficult to implement flexible solutions to these. The contrast between the fast-track of the private sector and the procedure the public sector requires is highlighted in a variety of studies, and further supported by contextual evidence, though the direct statistical test was limited.

Table 3

Thematic Synthesis of Empirical Findings

Theme	Supporting Studies	Key Finding	Relevance to Propositions
Training and Demand-Ability Fit	(Ermiş et al., 2021; Tafese Keltu, 2024)	Structured training predicts performance and perceptions of fit	Supports P1
Organizational Support and Supply-Value Fit	(Huang et al., 2023; Mohanraj, P, 2025)	Perceived investment enhances value alignment	Supports P2 with boundary conditions
Well-being as Mediator	(Chuang et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2023)	Affective states transmit fit to commitment	Supports P5
Bureaucratic Barriers	(Mohanraj, P, 2025)	Administrative rigidity constrains HRD flexibility	Supports P4
Culture as Enabler	(Huang et al., 2023)	Supportive cultures strengthen fit relationships	Supports P3

6. Discussion

Compared with previous reviews that examined either Person-Job Fit or Human Resource Development separately, the present study integrates both perspectives within the context of public sector higher education institutions. This approach highlights the unique influence of bureaucratic structures and institutional culture on the effectiveness of HRD interventions.

6.1 Bridging the Gap

The synthesis demonstrates that strategic HRD interventions serve as pivotal intermediary processes between the systemic nature of the employment system in the public sector and the systemic nature of the competency requirements in today's academia. This finding is particularly relevant for developing countries where public universities operate under highly centralized civil service regulations.

Theoretical Implications. The results are consistent with (Edwards, J. R, 1991) more dynamic view of P-J fit as a process of adjustment, rather than being a matching process. Private sector settings where market mechanisms help to quickly redefine roles are contrasted with public sector HEIs, in which HRD interventions are shown to be institutional substitutes for market flexibility, allowing for dynamic fit within rigid structural constraints. One way in which the mechanism of reciprocity can be understood is through Social Exchange Theory (Blau, P, 2017; Homans, G. C, 1974) which posits that as an institution invests in the development of



a person, it instills obligation norms that increase the perceived Supply-Value fit of that person even if the objective job characteristics stay the same. This is an extension of Blau's original formulation, in that it is shown that developmental currencies other than material currency are involved in exchange relations in professional circumstances.

6.2 Practical Implications

The findings highlight the need for HRD to be integrated into strategic planning process for public HEIs, instead of it being considered as an additional administrative task to their work. Since the process of removing the bureaucratic hurdles is unlikely to come anytime soon, institutions need to develop HRD programmes that make the best use of the existing process. This involves using digital platforms to provide flexible training, as well as creating cross-institutional mentorship networks that, despite having disadvantages in terms of internal hierarchy, are capable of addressing these needs, and rethinking performance feedback mechanisms to include developmental rather than an exclusively evaluative role. Digital platforms and AI-enabled tools can improve delivery and effectiveness of HRD programs in constrained public HEIs.

The Frontiers in Psychology (2024) research on Chinese HEIs reaffirms that HRM practices that are designed to fit specific institutional contexts play an important role in improving job satisfaction and wellbeing of academic and administrative staff. In the same way, the (Bakos, 2025) framework recommends specific measures like educational subsidies and alternative career progression schemes to overcome workforce development barriers in the public sector.

6.3 Digital Literacy as a Moderating Factor

Digital literacy emerged as an important contextual factor influencing the effectiveness of HRD interventions. As higher education increasingly adopts digital teaching platforms, online learning systems, and data-driven management processes, employees with stronger digital competencies are better positioned to benefit from development initiatives. Consequently, digital literacy may strengthen the relationship between HRD interventions and Person-Job Fit by enhancing the transfer and application of newly acquired skills.

6.3 Policy Implications

This synthesis is useful at the policy level in the effort to reform the classification system of civil servants to better reflect the nature of academic work. Tenure-track requirements need to explicitly include criteria of continuous professional development in tenure track requirements; promotion committees should give equal consideration to competency-based evaluations along with seniority. Further, there should be agile allocation of training resources based on new educational needs and technological requirements.

6.4 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions. First, it adds boundary conditions (bureaucratic constraints, institutional culture) to the Person-Environment Fit Theory that modify fit dynamics in public sector environments. Second, it incorporates the Social Exchange Theory into HRD literature to provide explanations for the causal mechanisms that would link development investments to perceptions of fit. Finally, it introduces a mediated-moderation model that explains how HRD is both mediated by well-being and moderated by organizational factors to address the call for more complex fit theorizing (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

Unlike previous studies that examined HRD practices or Person-Job Fit independently, this study proposes an integrated framework that explains how developmental interventions influence both capability-based and value-based dimensions of fit within bureaucratic public-sector environments. The framework extends Person-Environment Fit Theory by incorporating contextual boundary conditions and identifies Social Exchange processes as explanatory mechanisms through which HRD investments translate into improved perceptions of fit.



7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.

7.1 Conclusion

These findings provide insights applicable to public HEIs globally, especially in resource-constrained environments. This study makes three theoretical and practical contributions of human resource management. It is one of the few systematic syntheses of HRD-P-J fit relationships specifically in public sector higher education which has been previously missing from the extant literature. Second, it introduces a public sector bureaucratic system as a critical boundary condition which influences HRD effectiveness, bringing Person-Environment Fit Theory into resource-constrained environments.

Evidence from the reviewed studies generally supports the proposed propositions by a synthesis of 14 empirical studies. The strategic HRD interventions have positive effects on both Demand-Ability fit (P1) and Supply-Value fit (P2) which are mediated by occupational well-being (P5) and moderated by institutional culture (P3) and bureaucratic constraints (P4). The results indicate that systematic HRD programmes can help overcome competency gaps and boost organizational commitment in a highly structured setting of civil service.

Strategic Human Resource Development should no longer be viewed merely as an administrative support function but as a strategic capability that enables public universities to achieve sustainable institutional competitiveness through improved Person-Job Fit.

7.2 Policy Recommendations

From the results, the following conclusions and policy suggestions come to light for public sector HEIs:

1. **Update Tenure-Track Requirements:** Add the steps of continuous professional development to the tenure and promotion process and make it meaningful to faculty participation in HRD programs.
2. **Adopt Continuous Professional Development Frameworks:** Develop mandatory but flexible CPD plans for all academic staff encouraging critical competencies in digital literacy that meet the needs of instruction in the post-pandemic context.
3. **Transform performance evaluation systems:** That give developmental feedback that leads to action and supports individual career goals and institutional objectives.
4. **Organize Cross-Institutional Mentorship Networks:** When internal mentorship is limited due to hierarchy or resources, organize regional or national mentorship networks between young faculty and senior faculty from other institutions.
5. **Advocate for Flexibility in Civil Service HRD policies:** Discuss with policy makers in Government's Ministries for exemptions or changes in Civil Service rules that hinder agile HRD implementation in public Universities.

7.3 Implications for Practice

The institutional leaders need to understand that investments in HRD are strategic tools to make the institution more competitive in the global education marketplaces. In the face of system and organizational limitations, targeted interventions – such as training, mentorship and feedback systems – produce tangible changes in perceptions of fit, well-being, and commitment. The problem is that the interventions have to be designed to meet the requirements of the procedures and maximize any developmental impact.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

Future research should consider post-pandemic digital teaching and HRD practices, as they may alter P-J fit dynamics. There are a number of limitations in this study that limit the contributions it can make. The first is that the use of secondary data sources limits the control of consistency of measure across studies, and instruments measuring the P-J fit had a range of variation across the 14 synthesized studies, which may have introduced construct heterogeneity. Second, the geographical focus of primary studies (Turkey, Ethiopia, China, Pakistan, India) reduces its ability to be generalized to other situations of public university governance in the West. Third, academic staff is the only group being considered, as administrative staff is also prone to P-J fit challenges in public HEIs. Fourth, cross sectional designs were used in all synthesized studies, which precludes the possibility of drawing causal conclusions about the relationship between HRD and P-J fit. Fifth,



the results of this study might not apply to current academic contexts because of the changing nature of roles within the academic environment since 2020, especially in relation to digital literacy and online teaching. Only two of the studies included in this study address post-pandemic contexts (Huang et al., 2023; Mohanraj, P, 2025).

Longitudinal designs need to be prioritized for further research to gain insight into the temporal dynamics of HRD interventions and the trajectories. Comparative analysis of public and private HEIs would focus on effects of governance in the particular sector of a single national context. There would be causal evidence from intervention studies of specific HRD program designs to guide practice. Last but not least, an analysis of the fit between administrative staff and P-J would fill the void of understanding HRD effectiveness in public higher education. Studies should also examine administrative staff and comparative analyses between countries to expand generalizability. An additional limitation relates to publication bias, as the review included only published studies. Unpublished studies reporting non-significant findings may not have been captured, potentially affecting the overall interpretation of evidence.

Contribution of Authors

All the authors participated in the ideation, development, and final approval of the manuscript, making significant contributions to the work reported.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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