



HRM PRACTICES, EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING, AND WORKPLACE INCIVILITY IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Well-being in the workplace is a key strategic focus for organizations in highly emotive and contact service businesses like tourism and hospitality. This study uses two theories: Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to explore the direct impact of human resource management (HRM) practices on employee well-being and the moderating effect of workplace incivility on this relationship. A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather data from a total of 570 front line, supervisory and middle management employees of five tourism related sub-sectors: hotels/resorts, travel/tour operators, restaurants, transport/airline services and heritage/museum sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the hypothesized relationships. Results indicate that HRM practices have a significant positive influence on employee' well-being ($\beta = .164$, $t = 3.639$, $p < .001$). Workplace incivility was present as a significant and negative moderator ($\beta = -.073$, $t = 1.997$, $p = .046$), meaning that HRM practices' positive impact on well-being decreased with increases in workplace incivility and was no longer significant at higher levels of workplace incivility. The results indicate that while HRM systems alone are not enough to ensure the well-being of their employees, organizations need to manage interpersonal civility in the workplace at the same time. The study contributes to the under-researched developing-economy context of the tourism industry and provides practical suggestions for HR practitioners and policymakers who want to strengthen their tourism workforce.

Keywords: Employee Well-Being; HRM Practices; Tourism and Hospitality; Pakistan Workplace Incivility.

1. Introduction

Well-being has gone from the fringes to the forefront of the agenda for organizations around the world, in relation to employee well-being. Employees in service industries, like tourism and hospitality, face a heightened risk of stress, exhaustion, and reduced well-being due to the need to engage in prolonged emotional labor and constant interaction with customers (Hayat, Gamage, & Shahid, 2025). The strategic human resource management (HRM) interventions have become a point of contention in the scholars' circle, as it is argued that such interventions are necessary to replenish the psychological resources of employees and maintain their performance amid these challenging work conditions (Bhoir & Sinha, 2024).

Tourism plays a significant role in the national economy of Pakistan, accounting for almost 5.9 percent of the country's GDP and employing about 44.2 million people (Moosvi & Ali, 2022; World Bank, 2023). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), which boasts the nation's most popular natural and cultural attractions, has seen a significant revival in tourism activity in recent years (Pakistan Business Council, 2023). Unfortunately, this



expansion has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the wellbeing of the people who support the workforce. Workers in this field are often subjected to irregular and/or extended work hours, employment insecurity due to seasonal fluctuations, and difficult and sometimes disrespectful relationships with customers and co-workers (Baum, 2015).

Although tourism is a significant industry from the financial point of view, empirical studies on the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being in the context of the touristic industry are scarce especially in developing nations like Pakistan. To date, the majority of well-being research has been conducted in high-income western countries, where current labor protections, HR systems and workplace cultures and norms are very different from those of the South Asian tourism economy (Ju & Pak, 2025). This leaves a significant research gap to understand whether, and how, HRM practices can contribute to better employee well-being in the workforce of a developing-economy tourism sector.

A further gap concerns the boundary conditions under which HRM practices are effective. Organizations may invest considerable resources in HRM systems intended to support employees, yet the benefits of these systems can be undermined by negative interpersonal workplace conditions. Workplace incivility low-intensity, ambiguous, and often habitual disrespectful behavior such as rudeness, condescension, or being ignored (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) is one such condition. Even where HRM systems are formally supportive, day-to-day incivility from supervisors, coworkers, or customers may erode the psychological resources that supportive practices are intended to build (Cortina et al., 2001). Understanding whether workplace incivility weakens the well-being benefits of HRM practices is therefore both theoretically and practically important.

Taken together, these gaps point to the need for research that (a) is grounded in a developing-economy tourism labor market, (b) examines HRM practices as a predictor of employee well-being using a theoretically grounded, empirically robust modeling approach, and (c) explicitly tests the conditions under which HRM practices are more or less effective, rather than assuming uniform effectiveness across workplace contexts. This study is designed to address all three of these needs simultaneously, using data collected directly from tourism and hospitality employees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating two questions. First, do HRM practices have a significant positive effect on employee well-being among tourism and hospitality employees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? Second, does workplace incivility moderate this relationship, such that the positive effect of HRM practices on well-being is weaker when incivility is high? By answering these questions, the study extends Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to a developing-economy tourism setting, and offers evidence-based guidance to HR practitioners and policymakers seeking to strengthen employee well-being in the sector.

The significance of this study is threefold. Academically, it responds to repeated calls for well-being research conducted outside high-income, Western institutional contexts, and it tests whether widely used resource-based theories generalize to a South Asian tourism labor market. Practically, it provides tourism and hospitality organizations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa many of which operate with limited formal HR infrastructure with empirically grounded guidance on where to focus limited HRM resources for maximum well-being benefit. Socially, given that the tourism sector is a major source of employment in the province, improving the working conditions and well-being of this workforce has implications that extend beyond individual organizations to the broader economic and social development of the region.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The relevant literature is reviewed in the next section and hypotheses are developed for the study. This is then followed by description of the research methodology, presentation of the results and a discussion of the findings. Theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research are presented.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This section summarizes the theoretical rationale for the study, the study's context within the tourism and hospitality employment, and the hypothesized relationships between HRM practices, employee well-being, and workplace incivility.



2.1 The Tourism and Hospitality Work Context

Tourism and hospitality work is well known for its characteristics of being labour intensive, having direct customer contact, seasonality and requiring constant displays of emotions (Baum, 2015). Hotel, restaurant, travel agency, transport, heritage employees are likely to be expected to consistently demonstrate a positive attitude towards customers even when they are feeling different, to work non-regular and non-social hours that reflect the tourist demand cycle, and to endure a level of customer behavior that may not be tolerated in other service occupations. These forms of the work of tourism make employee well-being a particularly relevant issue because the psychological resources necessary for the process of emotional labor can be large and is easily exhausted if there is not sufficient organizational support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

These structural pressures are often exacerbated by other contextual factors in developing economies like Pakistan, such as seasonal influx of tourists, weak implementation of labour rights, and less developed HR structure when compared to global hospitality chains (Moosvi & Ali, 2022). In recent years, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has seen a significant rise in domestic tourism, owing to the security situation and interest in its natural and cultural heritage (Pakistan Business Council, 2023). This expansion has put a strain on the tourism labour force which remains in many instances employed in small and medium employment firms with little formal HRM systems. The understanding of function of HRM practice and what condition is able to affect the effectiveness of HRM in this particular context is thus timely and practically significant.

2.2 Theoretical Background: JD-R and COR Theory

Two theoretical approaches, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, are used as a basis for the study. The JD-R theory suggests that each job consists of various job demands that require sustained physical or psychological exertion and are related to costs, and job resources that facilitate job performance, reduce job demands and stimulate personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Within this framework, organizational resources like supportive HRM practices of supervisor support, flexible work arrangements and career development opportunities (CDOs) can moderate the negative impact of job demands and foster positive outcomes like engagement and well-being.

COR theory adds to this view by suggesting that individuals try to acquire, maintain, and increase resources and that stress and strain manifest when resources are threatened, lost or replenished at a rate that is less than the resources they expend to gain them (Hobfoll et al., 2018). HRM practices that are supportive from a COR perspective are in the nature of resource-building mechanisms which enable employees to build their psychological, social and material resources to cope with the emotional nature of tourism and hospitality work. On the other hand, workplace incivility is a depleting state: each time an employee is treated in an uncivil way, he or she has less resources to maintain well-being despite organizational supports.

JD-R and COR theory, when combined, offer a logical explanation for why HRM practices should be linked to increases in employee well-being, and that this relationship should be weaker when workplace incivility is high because it undermines the very resource base on which supportive HRM practices are designed to be built.

2.3 Conceptualizing Employee Well-Being

Well-being of employees has been understood in several different ways, some of which overlap, in the organizational literature and includes subjective happiness, life satisfaction, psychological flourishing and the lack of ill-being including burnout, exhaustion, and distress (Ryff, 1989). The highly prevalent occupational health approach, which views the well-being of employees as mainly the lowering of strain-based indicators, emotional exhaustion and psychological distress, is adopted in this study. According to Ryff (1989), emotional exhaustion is a state of depletion of an individual's emotional resources due to the continued exposure to demanding work conditions, and psychological distress is a more comprehensive state of psychological strain, which includes feelings of anxiety, tension and decreased functioning. This is applicable to the tourism and hospitality industry because of the high levels of emotional labour which are intense and prolonged, and therefore have the potential to be more likely to lead to resource depletion over time.

Well-being as defined here is not necessarily the absence of stress, but that employees can continue to function psychologically in an adequate manner in the face of the demands made on them. This framing is



akin to JD-R and COR theory which both focus on balance between resource-depleting demands and resource-building supports as key to how employees function over time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

2.4 HRM Practices and Employee Well-Being

HRM practices are defined as a cluster of organizational policies and actions that aim to facilitate employee functioning and development in the workplace such as supervisor and managerial support, wellness policies, flexible work arrangements, career development opportunities, opportunities for job crafting, and a psychologically safe climate (Bhoir & Sinha (2024); Ungren et al (2024).). From a JD-R perspective each of these practices can be viewed as a separate kind of job resource which assists employees in coping with the demands of the job.

Supervisor support helps employees navigate the role, offers feedback and makes them feel valued, thus minimizing role ambiguity and emotional stress associated with customer interactions. Employee wellness programs, including health, mental health and stress-management programs, have a direct impact on employees' physical and psychological resource reserves. Flexible working can provide workers more flexibility and choice over the way, time and location of work, and this can be especially beneficial in the tourism industry where demand is highly seasonal and unpredictable. Career development opportunities also convey a commitment to workers' future development that can improve motivation and decrease the feeling of becoming "stuck" in a low mobility, high strain role prevalent in certain areas of the tourism sector. Job crafting opportunities are defined as possibilities for employees to engage in pro-active job redesign, including redesigning of tasks, relationships or the meaning of the job and are thought to enhance meaningfulness and engagement (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Lastly, a psychologically safe climate where employees feel comfortable to raise issues, seek assistance and report problems without repercussions is a relational ground base that enables the effective operation of all other HRM practices.

An increasing amount of studies reveal that HRM practices like these have a positive relationship with employee wellbeing in diverse industrial sectors. Job demands are found to be reduced through supervisor and organizational support which also buffers the employees from strain (Bhoir & Sinha, 2024), and career development and flexible working conditions have been reported to increase job satisfaction and lower burnout. Especially in the tourism and hospitality sector, which is characterized by emotional work and non-standard working hours, HRM practices that offer stability, support, and development can be hypothesized to have significant impacts on employee well-being (Hayat et al., 2025; Unguren et al., 2024). Recent research in the tourism field has also shown that the well-being benefits of HRM practices are not limited to the reduction of negative state but also to more positive aspects of the occupational functioning (Saito et al., 2025).

In line with JD-R theory and COR theory, it is formulated that HRM practices are supposed to work together as a package of job resources to assist individuals to manage the requirements of the tourism job, decrease strain, and help in psychological functioning. Based on this, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H1: HRM practices have a significant positive effect on employee well-being.

2.5 The Moderating Role of Workplace Incivility

The effectiveness of HRM practices to improve employee well-being can vary under different circumstances in workplaces. The incivility that is experienced in the workplace is often being done at a low level and with no clear intent of harm, such as being rude or not being treated courteously by other people in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), is a common and often accepted phenomenon in many service workplaces. Incivility can come from various sources: either the supervisor, colleagues, subordinates or customers, and impact employees in different ways (Cortina et al., 2001).

Previous studies have found that workplace incivility relates to a variety of adverse employee behaviors such as higher levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and intentions to quit (Cortina et al., 2001; Alola et al., 2019). In the hospitality industry, in particular, there has been evidence that customers' incivility is especially important, as frontline staff is expected to accept and endure customers' incivility, either formally through service rules or informally due to



customers' cultural norms (Alola et al., 2019). Such a situation is one where employees have to "take the hit" in response to incivility while maintaining their professional, pleasant demeanor, and is believed to be particularly depleting, as the act of emotional regulation must take place on top of the distress actually caused by the uncivil encounter.

What has thus far not been explored in this literature, however, is whether workplace incivility does not only directly negatively affect employees, but also negatively impacts on the effectiveness of organizational efforts designed to benefit them. This study directly fills that gap by examining incivility as one of the moderators (not just a direct predictor) of employee well-being.

A COR perspective of workplace incivility is that it is a chronic depletion of psychological resources. Although incivility in the workplace can seem like a small occurrence, the effects of repeated and cumulative incivility may be as severe as other more obvious forms of workplace mistreatment (Cortina et al., 2001; Alola et al., 2019). Simultaneous exposure to supportive HRM practices and uncivil treatment might diminish the resource building effects of HRM support, or offset the resource building effects of HRM support, leading to a weaker relationship between HRM practices and well-being.

This is in line with the idea of JD-R theory that the positive influence of a job resource (e.g., supportive HRM practices) may be weakened by the presence of a job demand (e.g., incivility). Beyond the tourism industry, similar moderating patterns have been observed in empirical studies, which show that negative interpersonal experiences can undermine the positive effects of otherwise positive organizational practices, displaying a more general trend of the resource-based pattern (Rashid & Nadeem, 2025).

It is also worth noting that workplace incivility is more likely to occur (and more easily to normalize) in labor markets with weak formal grievance procedures and in which employees have little bargaining power, which is the case for much of the informal and semi-formal sector of Pakistan's tourism industry. In these environments, this moderating effect of incivility might be particularly strong as employees have limited institutional channels for seeking redress or protection from uncivil treatment. Hence, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2: Workplace incivility negatively moderates the relationship between HRM practices and employee well-being, such that the positive effect of HRM practices on well-being is weaker when workplace incivility is high.

2.6 Conceptual Model

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model tested in this study, in which HRM practices are hypothesized to have a direct positive effect on employee well-being (H1), and workplace incivility is hypothesized to moderate this relationship (H2). The model positions HRM practices as the independent variable, employee well-being as the dependent variable, and workplace incivility as a moderating variable acting on the direct path between them.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, positivist, and deductive research design, consistent with the study's aim of testing theoretically derived hypotheses using measurable constructs. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data from employees working in the tourism and hospitality industry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

3.2 Population, Sampling, and Data Collection

The target population comprised frontline, supervisory, and middle-management employees working across five tourism-related sub-sectors: hotels and resorts, travel and tour operators, restaurants, transport and airline services, and heritage and museum sites. Data were collected from employees working in six districts and regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa using a stratified purposive sampling technique, which ensured adequate representation across sub-sectors and geographic areas. After data screening (which covered missing data, the pattern of responses and multivariate outliers), a final sample of 570 valid responses was used for analysis.

The sample demographic profile showed most of the respondents are male (67.9%), followed by female (30.5%) and others (1.6%). Most respondents were aged 26-35 (39.8%) and slightly more than half



(51.9%) were married. Education was also diverse, with intermediate qualifications to postgraduate degrees, demonstrating varying entry requirements for tourism and hospitality occupations. The hotel/resort sub-sector had the largest proportion of respondents (36.7%) in keeping with the sub-sector's relative size in the province's tourism economy.

3.3 Measures

All constructs were measured using previously validated multi-item scales adapted from the tourism, hospitality, and organizational behavior literature, using five-point Likert-type response formats ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” HRM practices were measured as a reflective-formative higher-order construct capturing six lower-order dimensions: supervisor support, employee wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, career development opportunities, job crafting opportunities, and psychological safety climate. Employee well-being was measured using indicators capturing lower emotional exhaustion and lower psychological distress, consistent with established occupational well-being frameworks (Ryff, 1989). Workplace incivility was measured using established items capturing the frequency of disrespectful and inconsiderate treatment experienced at work (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by subject-matter experts for content validity and pilot-tested on a small sample of tourism employees to assess clarity and comprehension; minor wording adjustments were made based on this pilot feedback.

Standard demographic and employment-related items including gender, age, marital status, educational qualification, tourism/hospitality sub-sector, and job level were also collected and used to describe the sample profile.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical guidelines. Participants were told the goals of the study, that they could opt out of the study at any time, and that their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous before they answered the questions. There was no collection of personally identifiable information and data was used only for academic research purposes. Due to the sensitive nature of the experiences reported in this survey such as exposure to disrespectful treatment at work, extra precautions were taken to ensure that the respondents were assured of confidentiality, in order to maximize the fullness of their responses, while also minimizing socially desirable responding.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze the data, as it is a variance-based SEM method that has proven suitable for complex models with higher-order constructs and moderation effects and that can be used for both confirmatory and exploratory theory testing (Hair et al., 2022). This study's focus on prediction and theory extension, the use of a higher-order formative-reflective construct, and moderately complex structural model justified the use of PLS-SEM rather than covariance-based SEM.

The analysis was done in phases. The measurement model was first evaluated based on indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability (composite reliability), convergent validity (average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022). Second, common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test and a full collinearity VIF test (Kock, 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2003), and multicollinearity among predictor constructs was assessed using variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics. Third, the structural model was assessed, including the direct path from HRM practices to employee well-being and the interaction effect representing the moderating role of workplace incivility. The moderating effect was estimated using the two-stage approach recommended for models involving higher-order constructs, in which latent variable scores are first extracted and then used to create the interaction term (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler & Fassott, 2010). The statistical significance of all path coefficients, including the interaction term, was assessed using a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples, generating t-values, p-values, and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for each estimated path (Hair et al., 2022). Finally, the explanatory power (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) of the model were assessed to evaluate its overall adequacy (Hair et al., 2022).



4. Results

4.1 Respondent Profile

Regarding the characteristics of the respondents, majority of the respondents were from frontline and supervisory positions in the five targeted tourism sub-sectors, with the hotel/resort sub-sector providing the highest number of respondents, given that it represents a relatively larger share of the tourism workforce in the province. The majority of respondents (61.4% of the age range between 26 and 45 years) were also in the age group that is likely to be the most critical in terms of the impact of HRM practices on employees for workplace incivility, as the respondents are in the core working age of a tourism career. The relatively even distribution of single and married respondents and the variety of educational backgrounds indicate the sample represents a reasonably good cross-section of the province's tourism workforce, not concentrated in one demographic, and not dominated by the other.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were acceptable. Convergent validity was confirmed because all composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the customary thresholds, and all construct indicators loaded above the recommended threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was proven according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion as well as the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) with all the HTMT values below the recommended value.

Common method bias was assessed using both procedural remedies during data collection and statistical tests, including Harman's single-factor test and a full collinearity assessment. All variance inflation factor (VIF) values fell below the recommended threshold of 3.3 (Kock, 2015), indicating that common method bias was not a significant concern in this dataset (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.3 Direct Effect: HRM Practices and Employee Well-Being (H1)

The structural model results provided support for Hypothesis 1. HRM practices had a significant positive effect on employee well-being ($\beta = .164$, $SE = .045$, $t = 3.639$, $p < .001$), with the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval excluding zero. This finding indicates that employees who perceive higher levels of supportive HRM practices including supervisor support, wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, career development, job crafting opportunities, and a psychologically safe climate report meaningfully better well-being outcomes, in terms of lower emotional exhaustion and lower psychological distress.

4.4 Moderating Effect of Workplace Incivility (H2)

Hypothesis 2 proposed that workplace incivility would negatively moderate the relationship between HRM practices and employee well-being. The interaction term (HRM practices $\times$ workplace incivility) had a significant negative effect on employee well-being ($\beta = -.073$, $SE = .037$, $t = 1.997$, $p = .046$), with the 95% bootstrapped confidence interval of $[-.145, -.001]$ excluding zero. This result supports Hypothesis 2.

To interpret the nature of this interaction, simple slope analysis was conducted at three levels of workplace incivility: one standard deviation below the mean (low incivility), at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean (high incivility). The conditional effect of HRM practices on employee well-being was strongest and highly significant at low levels of incivility ($\beta = .237$, $p < .001$). At the mean level of incivility, the effect remained positive and significant ($\beta = .164$, $p < .001$). However, at high levels of workplace incivility, the effect weakened substantially and lost statistical significance ($\beta = .091$, $p = .087$). This pattern indicates that the well-being benefits of HRM practices are most pronounced when workplace incivility is low, and are effectively neutralized when incivility is high.

4.5 Model Fit and Predictive Relevance

The structural model explained a meaningful proportion of variance in employee well-being ($R^2 = .263$), and the model demonstrated predictive relevance for employee well-being, with a Q^2 value of .315, well above the zero-threshold required to establish predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2022). Taken together, these results indicate that the hypothesized model provides both explanatory and predictive value for understanding employee well-being in the tourism and hospitality context.

4.6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing



In summary, both hypotheses were supported by the data. HRM practices had a significant positive direct effect on employee well-being (H1: supported), and workplace incivility significantly and negatively moderated this relationship (H2: supported), such that the well-being benefits of HRM practices were strongest under low incivility and became statistically indistinguishable from zero under high incivility. Table 2 summarizes the hypothesis testing results.

Table 1

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	HRM Practices $\rightarrow$ Employee Well-being	.164	3.639	< .001	Supported
H2	HRM Practices $\times$ Workplace Incivility $\rightarrow$ Employee Well-being	-.073	1.997	.046	Supported

Table 2

Conditional Effects of HRM Practices on Employee Well-Being at Different Levels of Workplace Incivility

Incivility Level	Conditional Effect (β)	p-value	Significant?
Low (-1 SD)	.237	< .001	Yes
Mean	.164	< .001	Yes
High (+1 SD)	.091	.087	No

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which HRM practices positively affect the well-being of employees in the tourism and hospitality industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and how this relationship could be moderated by the severity of incivility faced by the employees in the workplace. The answers to both questions are clearly indicated by the results: HRM practices do significantly improve employee well-being, but they are much more effective when they are delivered in civil workplace environments. These findings will be addressed in relation to the previous theory and research, and implications for theory, practice, and future research will be discussed below.

The results of this study strongly support both hypotheses. Firstly, HRM practices were investigated and it was found that HRM Practices have significant positive impact on employee wellbeing among the employees working in Tourism and Hospitality Sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This is in line with JD-R theory which suggests that the resources possessed by an organization can aid employees in coping with job demands and maintaining positive functioning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), and with previous studies indicating that supportive HRM systems contribute to less strain and better well-being outcomes in service industries (Bhoir & Sinha, 2024; Unguren et al., 2024). The result adds to an existing body of research in a developing-economy context, which has been under-researched in terms of empirical studies, and indicates that even relatively small efforts at supervisor support, flexibility, career development and psychological safety may have discernable well-being consequences for tourism employees working under challenging conditions. While this direct relationship ($\beta = .164$) was a small effect in absolute terms, it nonetheless was of the magnitude reported in the larger well-being literature, where the realization of well-being is known to be influenced by many personal, familial, and situational factors that are not directly under the control of any single organizational intervention (Ryff, 1989); a small but significant change in well-being can therefore have a substantial impact when multiplied across many employees.

Second, importantly, and new, the study showed that workplace incivility has a significant negative effect on the positive relationship between HRM practices and employee well-being. This finding resonates with the COR theory's assertion that resource-depleting conditions can cancel the positive impact of resource-building interventions (Hobfoll et al., 2018), and it expands upon previous studies on incivility in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001) that indicate that incivility does not just negatively affect employees directly, but it can also serve as a boundary condition that reduces the effectiveness of otherwise positive HRM systems. The simple slope results support this interpretation: the positive influence of the HRM practices on well-being was most pronounced when incivility was low, was



still significant when incivility was at the mean, and was not significant when incivility was high. From a well-being perspective, this implies that organizations that invest in supportive HRM systems, but accept a rude or disrespectful culture may experience significantly reduced return on investment in well-being. This is a significant discovery for HRM decision makers, as it suggests that HRM investment and civility management are not independent, stand-alone projects but need to be viewed as part of a broader well-being strategy.

The findings are especially salient for the business of tourism and hospitality, where there is high customer contact, emotional labor, and hierarchical service structures can often lead to incivility from both customers and subordinates, supervisors or coworkers (Cortina et al., 2001; Alola et al., 2019). Especially for frontline workers in the tourism sector, it is expected that they take uncivil behaviour from customers as a part of their job, sometimes called service with a smile no matter how they are treated. In these situations, HRM practices that only consider formal support mechanisms, excluding the interpersonal climate in the workplace (how supervisors and coworkers behave towards each other, and how the organization reacts to uncivil customer behaviour) may not be effective in providing the intended well-being benefits. This emphasizes the need to consider employee well-being not only as formally available in HRM systems on paper, but also as what the HRM systems are actually "living" in daily life.

The findings also resonate with recent calls for research in the tourism and hospitality field to focus on the conditions or boundary of the HRM practices–well-being relationship, that is, when and for whom the relationship is valid (Hayat et al., 2025; Ju & Pak, 2025; Saito et al., 2025). This study adds one such boundary condition, workplace incivility, to our understanding of the well-being effects of HRM practices, which are not necessarily "one size fits all" dependent on workplace conditions.

Lastly, and most importantly, the model explains moderate amount of variance in the outcomes ($R^2 = .263$ for employee well-being) and has already been demonstrated to have predictive relevance ($Q^2 = .315$), suggesting that HRM practices and workplace incivility are important predictors of employee well-being but there are other factors beyond the scope of this model that contribute to the variance such as personal coping resources, family factors, financial pressures, and macroeconomic and labor market conditions of the tourism sector in Pakistan. This confirms the idea that the health and well-being of employees in tourism is a multiply determined phenomenon, where HRM and workplace civility are among the factors that can influence organizations, but by no means the only ones.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This paper contributes in a number of theoretical aspects. First, it introduces the application of JD-R and COR theory in a developing-economic context of tourism, showing that the resource-based logic of these theories is applicable in a context where labor market conditions, HR infrastructure and cultural norms differ from those usually studied in western contexts. This extension is important in that it tests the generalizability of the resource theory of theorizing beyond the institutional context it was developed in, and that the general mechanisms involved in resource provision buffering functioning, and resource depletion undermining functioning are the same in a South Asian tourism labor market.

Second, the results suggest that workplace incivility is an important negative boundary condition on the HRM practices–well-being relationship, which is contrary to the universal and unconditional positive impact of HRM practices. This challenges a prevalent assumption in the applied HRM literature that the more supportive certain practices are, the more likely they are to lead to improved outcomes for employees, and provides a clear indication that the interpersonal climate in which the practices are implemented can have a tangible impact on their effectiveness. There are implications for how more generally HRM outcomes are modelled: Models that do not include relational or climate-based moderators may overestimate the average expected benefit of HRM investment, especially in the context of incivility in the workplace.

Third, the study also provides empirical data from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tourism industry, which, although not well researched, is an economically important sector; thus, expanding the geography and sector of employee well-being studies. This research addresses part of the empirical lack of HRM and well-being in



tourism, which so far has been mostly done in higher income, more institutionally developed contexts, and serves as a foundation for future comparative research in tourism economies at different levels of development.

Fourth, methodologically, this study provides an example of how the two-stage PLS-SEM procedure can be applied to examine moderation effects involving a higher-order construct of HRM practices as well as bootstrapped simple slope analysis to interpret the moderation effect. This methodological approach can serve as a model for future researchers who want to test similar moderation models of multidimensional HRM constructs in applied organizational and tourism research.

6.2 Practical Implications

The results have several implications for the practice of tourism and hospitality companies, human resource professionals and policy makers.

Second, HRM practices such as supervisor support, wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, career development opportunities, job crafting and psychological safety should continue to be invested in by organizations as these practices have a meaningful impact on employee well-being. Even less expensive interventions like clearer, more predictable schedules, clear communication about promotions and pathways, and avenues for staff to raise issues could have a significant impact on the well-being of tourism workers in challenging conditions.

Second and importantly, HRM investment should not be considered as adequate in and by itself. Since the consequences of workplace incivility are likely to be substantial and to counteract the benefits of HRM investments, formal civility-building interventions should be added to HRM investments. These could include respectful workplace training for all staff levels, codes of conduct which explicitly name rudeness and disrespect (and not just more serious types of misconduct), easily available and confidential reporting systems for uncivil behavior, and evident leadership in respectful interpersonal relationships. If it is not, HRM investment runs the risk of being undermined by the very day to day interactions which it is designed to support.

Third, HR practitioners should be especially mindful of supervisor behaviours because supervisors can be a key source of both formal organizational support and a possible source of incivility to subordinates. Given supervisors' disproportionate role in shaping the day-to-day work experience for employees, targeted training in respectful communication and/or managing conflict with others could be an effective and efficient approach to maintaining the beneficial aspects of more general HRM systems.

Fourth, because mistreatment in the workplace is often instigated by a customer, tourism organizations should also assess the extent to which they support employees when they encounter mistreatment, such as explicit service-recovery policies that prevent employees from taking the brunt of the mistreatment, and manager support when employees report about the mistreatment behavior. They redefine civility management as being more than just managing relationships between employees; it's also about how the organization can help its employees manage their relationships with external sources of incivility.

Fifth, in a province where tourism jobs are often seasonal and may be found in small and medium scale businesses lacking dedicated human resource management departments, organizations of all sizes should consider implementing scaled down versions of the practices that are suitable to the size and resources of the organization, rather than assuming that significant investment in HRM is only possible in large hotel chains or formal tourism organizations.

Lastly, at the policy level, tourism authorities and industry bodies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in Pakistan in general should consider to include employee well-being and workplace civility in sustainable tourism development, tourism certification and/or industry association guidelines, because the development of tourism has to be based on the well-being of those who provide tourism services in the long run. Whilst sustainability issues have become a part of the tourism policy debates at both the environmental and the destination level, the well-being of the workforce should receive a similar treatment as one of the key elements of sustainable tourism development.



7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are a number of limitations in this study which should be acknowledged, as well as suggestions for future work.

First, the cross-sectional design restricts the possibility of making strong conclusions regarding the causal relationship that is being evaluated. While the proposed relationships are based on the existing theories, the reverse or reciprocal causality that HRM practices are perceived as better or employees are treated in a more civil way when they feel better is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. Future studies could benefit from a longitudinal or time-lagged design that would help support causal inference.

Second, the study used self-report data from a survey, which, although analyzed to minimize common method bias, cannot entirely rule out the possibility of social desirability and other self-report biases, especially in sensitive constructs like workplace incivility. Future studies might employ supervisor or coworker ratings, or organizational ratings, if available, in addition to self-report ratings.

Thirdly, the study examined workplace incivility as an overall construct rather than examining specific sources of incivility (supervisors, coworkers, subordinates, or customers). Considering that these sources can have different effects on employees and that they can interact differently with HRM practices, future research is needed that takes into account source-specific incivility effects, including the specific effect of customer incivility in serviced tourism jobs.

Fourth, this study only examined direct and moderating effects of HRM practices, workplace incivility and employee well-being. Future studies may investigate other mediation dimensions, such as job performance or thriving at work, psychological safety or perceived organizational support, in which HRM practices might be linked with well-being, as well as other moderation dimensions, such as leadership style, organizational culture or job insecurity, which might influence the relationship between HRM practices and well-being.

Fifth, the study has been carried out in a limited area of tourism and hospitality industry in a single province of Pakistan. This offers some context specific insight, but care should be taken to extrapolate the conclusions to other industries, regions or country contexts. Future studies may benefit from replicating and expanding the model to other service industries and other developing economy environments, and may benefit from a qualitative or mixed methods approach that can provide more in-depth understandings of the lived experience of HRM support and incivility than a quantitative survey design can alone.

8. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the impact of HRM practices on employee well-being in tourism and hospitality sector employees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and to examine the moderation role of workplace incivility in this relationship. Results reveal that HRM practices have a positive significant effect on employee well-being, and that the positive effect of HRM practices is negatively moderated by the level of incivility, such that uncivil treatment virtually wipes out the positive effects of HRM practices at high levels of uncivil treatment. These findings indicate that, apart from supportive HRM systems, organizations need to manage the interpersonal climate of the workplace to protect employee well-being. With increasing importance of tourism as a source of employment and economic activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, HRM strategies will need to be integrated with formal organizational supports, as well as with a conscious and sustained effort to maintain a civility and respect at the workplace that enables the workforce to sustain the growing tourism industry.

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 conflict of interest.

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Informed Consent



Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability

This study relies exclusively on publicly available secondary sources, including corporate disclosures, industry reports, and peer-reviewed literature, all of which are cited in the References section.

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