

# The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture between High Involvement HRM Practices and Employee Engagement in the Banking Sector of Bangladesh

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## Abstract

This paper reflects the results of an empirical study conducted in the banking sector of Bangladesh to assess the impact of High involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices on employee engagement (EE) with the mediating effect of organizational culture (OC). Data for this study have been collected using purposive judgmental sampling technic from 368 employees (precisely Officers and Senior Officers) working in different private commercial banks of Bangladesh. Findings of this study exhibited significant positive impact of high involvement HRM practices on employee engagement. Alongside, the mediating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between HI HRM practices and employee engagement was also found to be significant in this context. Thus, it might be summarized that if the right set HI HRM practices are established in alignment with a proper organizational culture setup, it might immensely boost the engagement level of the employees in banking sector of Bangladesh and would play a significant role in recovering the banking sector from the turmoil it has fallen into due to increasing pressure of digitalization, deregulatory measures, and obviously the damages incurred to this sector by the global pandemic Covid-19 as well.

**Keywords:** High involvement HRM practices, organizational culture, employee engagement, banking sector, private commercial banks, Bangladesh.

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## 1. Introduction

In the competitive business environment, organizations are continuously striving to operate at a sustainable pace. Organizations under current circumstances require robust, motivated, loyal and engaged employees in their manpower (Chen, 2017; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008) since highly engaged employees can add more to organizational sustainability and competitive advantage (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016; Gruman & Saks, 2011). Engaged employees tend to be more enthusiastic and innately linked with their work that in consequence render positive attributes to organizational performance measures (Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement serves as a predictor of the efficiency of any organization countering dynamic changes and facilitate the goal attainment and success of the organization as well (Fletcher & Robinson, 2014). Previously attempts have been undertaken by organizations to utilize employee engagement to foster organizational strength and uphold competitive advantage. To sustain in this dynamic competitive atmosphere, EE can be treated as tool to strengthen positive behavior and outlook from employees for the duties that they have been assigned for ensuring the competitive edge of the organization (Woodruffe, 2006). EE aims in developing alignment between the employee and the goals set by the organization and to achieve targets beyond expectation as well (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013).

Previous studies have evidently found employee engagement to be more crucial precisely for the service organizations since the intensity of engagement is largely impacted by employment conditions like human resource management (HRM) practices (Presbitero, 2017; Yeh, 2013; Ashill& Rod, 2011). Moreover, certain HRM Practices have been identified to create distinctive impact on EE. Henceforth, importance should be laid on constructing an effective set of HRM practices rather than proceeding with a bundle of usual HRM practices Chen (2017). A bundle of varied HR practices playing a constructive role in nurturing employee competencies that are crucial for exhibiting innovative behavior of employees has been commonly identified as High Involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices.

Moreover, EE aims to be more evident in an amicable and cooperative work environment. A cooperative work environment facilitates error free and two-way communication, effective work-life balance, sustainable training and development program, fair reward and recognition program and unified team spirit for the employees. A crucial factor for the work environment is the employees' perceived care and support embedded within it given by the management as well as the organization (May et al., 2004). Engagement of employees is also facilitated by a proper alignment of mission and vision statement of organization, supportive treatment of colleagues, and an effective policy for ensuring work-life balance of the employees. These set of beliefs,

practices, principles and policies maintained within an organization are treated as organizational culture (OC). OC within an organization generates a significant influence on the employees. A suitable culture of trust and security within the organization created by reassuring management team inspires the employees to display their work enthusiasm rising above the fear of disappointment, henceforth boosting engagement of employees towards their work.

A remarkable growth could be witnessed in the banking industry of Bangladesh in the last couple of years reflecting a significant input to the national economy. Presently, 61 banks are operating in Bangladesh. The banking was already in difficulty beforehand while the pandemic has worsen the condition far beyond expectations. The number of banks is on the increase but they seem to be less interested about expanding operations towards the rural areas. For any organization, whether manufacturing or service-based, the employees play a key role in ensuring sustainability of business. Since the banking sector is threatened by the pandemic followed by other issues like loan default, and high non-performing loans etc. Therefore, it is urgently necessary to look into ways that employees may be more deeply involved in their job in order to improvise. One such opportunity is the adaptation of the new business model for digital banking. Although it has been clearly demonstrated and established that HRM practices and employee engagement are positively related, the relevance of the relationship between high involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices and employee engagement (EE) is still unknown and needs further research. Furthermore, further research has to be done on the crucial question of how organizational culture (OC) influences the relationship between HI HRM and EE.

This study has two contributions to make. It evaluated the effects of HI HRM on employee engagement in the form of vigor, devotion, and absorption in the context of Bangladesh's banking sector, and it also looked at the mediating role of organizational culture in this relationship. The relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement has received very little research, leaving this subject remains uncertain (Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013). Therefore, the effect of HI HRM on employee engagement (EE) in a service sector like the banking sector could only be sporadically found in the literature that is currently available. Research on organizational culture (OC) as a mediator between HI HRM and employee involvement in terms of vigor, devotion, and absorption was also lacking. Therefore, this study that was undertaken in the setting of the banking industry also contributes to this field of study. The conceptual structure of the current study, which focuses on the connection between HI HRM practices, employee engagement (EE), and the mediating role of organizational culture, is presented in Figure 1.

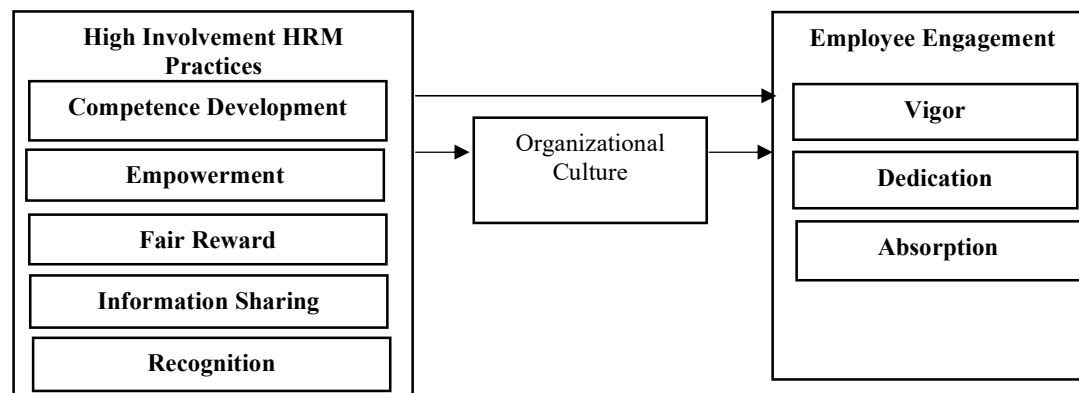


Figure.1. Proposed Research Framework (Source: Authors' own)

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement (EE) is defined as an employee's good or bad impassive connection to their work, coworkers, and the organization as a whole. This connection has a huge impact on the employee's enthusiasm to advance their skills and perform admirably at work (Sandhya & Sulphrey, 2019). The idea of employee engagement has also been described as a positive, enthusiastic mindset relating to one's employment that possesses qualities like vitality, devotion, and absorption. This might be treated as a composite and steady behavioral demonstration, more prevalent and determined in nature, a rational and emotional state of an individual employee's mind which is exhibited irrespective of any exact person, incident, and action. A relevant model on job demands-resources claims that certain job features like autonomy can stimulate an encouraging phenomena which in turn might conclude in employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2003). Employee engagement in connection with accelerated degree of vigor, dedication and absorption evidently nurtures and strengthens the innovative behavior of employees' demonstrated with perseverance and eagerness (Kwon & Kim, 2019)

Three factors—meaningfulness, safety, and availability—that show how engaged individuals are at work are derived from their emotional capacity to carry out their duties. These factors are regarded as the main ones that influence employee engagement. That is to say, innovative work behavior is depicted among the employees once their affective-cognitive judgement concludes that their work is worthy for them and their employer as well. It is only then the employees complete their works safely, in a secured manner with the availability of required work components (Kahn, 1990).

## 2.2. High Involvement HRM Practices

According to MacDuffie (1995) and Huselid (1995), HRM practices can promote better actions when precisely three criteria are met: situations in which employees possess strong abilities, environments in which employees feel encouraged to use their abilities, and lastly situations in which employees are given opportunities to display their efforts. These viewpoints—often referred to as high-involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices—have been clearly shown to greatly improve supply chain (Fu et al., 2013), firm (Huselid), operational (MacDuffie, 1995), and individual (Batt, 2002) performance and innovation. According to Batt (2002), HI HRM systems included a variety of HRM procedures that emphasized developing employee capabilities, enhancing employee benefits, and promoting employee involvement and creativity.

HI HRM practices have sustained as a dependable tool which facilitates a remarkable selection of certain practices creating a notable impact on growth of skill, abilities, learning and enthusiasm of the employees for the past two decenniums. HI HRM can be explained as a set of collective HR approaches comprising of three broad classifications: skill, opportunity, and motivation increasing practices. All these kinds of approaches demonstrate considerable influence on improvising skills, capabilities and learnings of individual employees (Jiang et al., 2012). Skill nurturing aspects of HR like strategic recruitment, robust selection, wide-ranging training programs etc initiate suitable skill enhancement of individual employees whereas the opportunity developing HR practices induces enabling employees for utilizing their abilities to attain organizational objectives. On the other hand, motivation-generating techniques like career advancement, providing job stability, and providing employees with information regarding performance reviews help to increase employee commitment and motivation (Jiang et al., 2012; Delery & Shaw, 2001). (Jiang et al, 2012; Gardner et al., 2011; Gong et al., 2009). HI HRM makes the most of four components: efficient empowerment and involvement, just incentives and rewards, information exchange, and competency development (Ciavarella, 2003). Once more, Guy and Michel (2007) and Yang (2012) proposed a multidimensional framework that included competence development, empowerment, just rewards, information sharing, and acknowledgment.

## 2.3. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as a collection of implicit ideas held by a group that are widely acknowledged and shared, and that explain how the organization perceives, anticipates, and reacts to various external conditions (Schein 1985, 2000). Nonetheless, the employees tend to be frequently ignorant about the certain existing implies norms of their organizational culture and usually might not grow conscious before they confront with a separate entity (Ajmal and Koskinen, 2008). Researchers advocated for the value orientation of culture, agreeing to the fact that OC comprises of four robust and repetitive components: assumption, value, artifact and symbol (Alavi et al. 2005-2006). A divergent viewpoint highlights implicit presumptions, the behavior-focused part of culture as demonstrated through reliable work habits (Hofstede et al., 1990; Alavi et al., 2005-2006). A center of the OC subunits (which include the subunits output-oriented, tightly monitored, work-oriented, closed system model, and professional-oriented) was previously identified in studies based on empirical data sets (Hofstede et al. 1990).

OC impacts how employees and groups communicate with fellow organizations and reflects strong influence on behavior as well (Saad & Abbas, 2018). OC can be attributed to various roles like: allowing employees with an entity to demonstrate unique attributes which distinguish them from competitor organizations, improving mutual cooperation so that the work environment turns contented while family bonds become strengthened, and modeling behavior by growing consciousness among employees about surrounding environment. So, OC produces desired outcome of organization through employees fulfilling duties and responsibilities entrusted upon them. OC turns to be immensely beneficial in case employees truly bear the values and norms established and consequently generates positive habits for the employees themselves in return (Kalaichelvi, Antony, & Vimalanathan, 2017).

## 3. Hypothesis Development

### 3.1. HI HRM Practices and Employee Engagement (EE)

A number of HR techniques are used by firms that view their workforce as a strategic source of strength, and HI HRM methods encourage the modeling of employees' skills and traits for enhanced job performance (Guthrie, 2001). Increasing number of studies are now opting to determine the impact of HRM practices on the

performance and engagement of employees (Alfes, Shantz, & Truss, 2012). Even though existing literature evidently links HRM practices with individual and organizational level outcomes, the findings continue to be mixed in nature (Whicker & Andrews, 2004). It has been suggested by Torrington and Hall (1998), that organizations are expected to benefit from more enthusiastic and engaged employees with the support from the appropriate set of HRM practices.

By expanding employee awareness about their job-related tasks and responsibilities, HI HRM techniques including in-depth training, thorough job design, and ongoing feedback motivate employees to develop their skills and creative capacities (Collins & Smith, 2006; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Gittel et al., 2010; Harden, Kruse, & Blasi, 2010). Moreover, HI HRM practices induce autonomy which inspires employee engagement in creative processes like idea generation, experimentation and validation that might be implemented in individual work roles developing the work process in consequence (Shin, Jeon, and Bae, 2016). Furthermore, HI HRM initiated employees' engagement in diversified arenas to foster their cross-functional abilities in human asset development and employment at work (Lawler, 2005). Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated in the following way:

**H1:** *High Involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices is positively related to employee engagement (EE).*

### 3.2. HI HRM Practices and Organizational Culture (OC)

HRM procedures have been closely scrutinized as a core component of business culture. HRM procedures like hiring, development of employees, performance reviews, and compensation have a significant impact on an organization's culture (Singh, 2010). In line with this, HRM has been also identified as a significant factor for modeling organizational culture and effectiveness as well (Kumari, 2012). Culture has been previously explored as an outcome of HR practices. It has been postulated that OC is synchronized with the help of strategically aligned HR practices (Cabrera & Bonache, 1999). Tuning HR practices with OC is a major concern for the organization that is crucial for attaining desired objectives and creating expected results. OC might inspire employees to strengthen team spirit and foster teamwork for development (Florea et al., 2011). The strategic orientation of OC with HR practices significantly influence successful mergers, increases productivity and also determine the role of human resource as a source of competitive advantage (Mathis & Jackson, 2008). Since, HI HRM acts as a tool of management concentrated on employee involvement (Yang, 2012) and employee involvement is an outcome of organizational culture (Apostoluo, 2000), the following hypothesis has been developed in the following way:

**H2:** *High Involvement HRM (HI HRM) practices is positively related to organizational culture (OC).*

### 3.3. Organizational Culture (OC) and Employee Engagement (EE)

To illustrate the link between company culture and employee engagement, the Social Exchange Theory may be used. The two-way communication between the employees and the organization generates the engagement of employees and their organization. (Robbinson, Perryman & Hayday 2004). An illustration of interchange is embedded within the concept of organizational culture, in which an appropriate value system and its proper administration is the commendation on the part of the organization towards the employees. Psychologically employees feel a sense of safety within a good contextual organizational culture. Moreover, a positive relation has been found between the safe feeling of employees' and employee engagement by previous studies (Kahn, 1990). Precisely, organizational culture contributes to presence of employee engagement by acting as a between the organization and its members (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010).

Henceforth, the hypothesis has been formulated in the following manner:

**H2:** *Organizational culture (OC) is positively related to Employee Engagement (EE).*

### 3.4. Organizational Culture as a Mediator

It has been discovered that organizational culture mediates the connection between transformational leadership, change, and innovation (Sorros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). Alongside, participative leadership and innovative culture has been put through empirical observation as a predictor of organizational performance (Obgonna & Harris, 2000). OC is a set of norms, beliefs, interpretations, perceptions and prospects capable of unifying a group of people working within the same organization. At the same time, it provides a way out for problems pertaining to the organization, connects and adjusts with aspects rising outside the organization, and also aligns the members in the same spirit (Lok & Crawford, 1999). It can be addressed closely to ideological conceptions held mutually by all the employees as well (Obgonna and Harris, 2000).

OC reflects a considerable impact on the organizations, the behavior of its employees, their degree of motivation, consequently affecting the financial performance of the organization in return (Jill et al., 2003). The following hypothesis has been put forth in a manner similar to this because comprehensive HR policies have a large and beneficial impact on OC and OC, in contrast, show a very direct and positive association with employee engagement (Herminingsih, 2015):

**H4:** *Organizational Culture (OC) mediates the relationship between HI HRM practices and Employee Engagement (EE).*

#### 4. Methods

##### 4.1. Sample

The research was done on private commercial banks doing business in Bangladesh. In the past few years, this industry has been countering increasing pressure to develop the services provided owing to technological upgradations and deregulatory issue. In alignment, efficiency improvement has been the focal point nowadays (Fiordelisi et al. 2011). To induce efficiency through employee engagement, banks are increasingly inclining to establish a set of best practices (including HR practices) (Rashid, Zobair, Chowdhury, and Islam, 2020). However, data for this study have been gathered in 2021 (April, 2021-May, 2021) from employees (precisely the officers and senior officers) working in the private banks of Bangladesh. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used as the tool of data collection for this study. Among the 43 private commercial banks, data has been collected from the employees of 8 private commercial banks who were working in different branches of Dhaka city. Initially, a total of 15 commercial banks were approached for this study but incidentally only 8 of them agreed and henceforth through personal communication with the branch manager and HR manager in cases, the questionnaires were circulated and collected afterwards.

For the purpose of this study, purposive judgmental sampling technic was utilized which is a popular non-probability sampling design. This method is appropriate for cases when the updated complete list of respondents is unavailable and determining the actual population tends to be very troublesome (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Initially 600 questionnaires were distributed among the employees but eventually complete responses were collected from 411 employees only. Of the responses collected, 43 questionnaires were discarded due to inconsistency in information provided. Afterwards, 368 questionnaires were processed for further analysis.

##### 4.2. Measures and Data Analysis Technique

The study has adapted all the items from existing validated research works. For instance, items measuring HI HRM practices have been adapted from the works of Guy and Michel (2007) and Yang (2012), items measuring employee engagement has been adapted from the work of Na-Nan, Pukkeeree, and Chaiprasit (2020), whereas organizational culture has been measured by adapting the items from the work of Van den Berg and Wilderom (2004). The software Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to insert the data, analyze the corresponding descriptive statistics, and determine the study's demographic profile. Partial Least Square (PLS 3.2.7) was used to measure the data and construct the structural model based on the earlier-formulated hypotheses.

##### 4.3. Results

The respondents of the survey were staff members holding officer and senior officer positions in Bangladesh's private commercial banks. The average age of participating respondents of this survey is 33 years. Around 51% respondents belonged to the age group 25-34 years. Approximately 66.4% of the participants were male while the rest were female. On average, the tenure of work of the respondents has been found to be 6 years.

##### 4.4. Measurement Model

The measurement model generated for this study has been assessed through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ascertain the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of this model. Table 1 shows that the value of all items loadings is superior to 0.5 and the values for both AVE and CR are quite higher than 0.5 and 0.7 respectively. According to this table, the lowest value of CR is 0.841 whereas the lowest value of AVE is 0.520. Hereafter, it can be summarized that this study abides by the convergent validity by achieving the acceptability criteria.

Table 1: Measurement Model

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Item Loading</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
<i>HI HRM</i>	HI HRM 1	0.768	0.519	0.843
	HI HRM 2	0.647		
	HI HRM 3	0.737		
	HI HRM 4	0.728		
	HI HRM 5	0.714		
	HI HRM 6	0.722		
	HI HRM 7	0.727		

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Item Loading</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
<i>Employee Engagement</i>	HI HRM 8	0.763		
	HI HRM 9	0.757		
	HI HRM 10	0.688		
	HI HRM 11	0.723		
	HI HRM 12	0.736		
	HI HRM 13	0.747		
	HI HRM 14	0.731		
	HI HRM 15	0.743		
	HI HRM 16	0.721		
	HI HRM 17	0.755		
	HI HRM 18	0.756		
	HI HRM 19	0.722		
	HI HRM 20	0.732		
	HI HRM 21	0.656		
	HI HRM 22	0.723		
	HI HRM 23	0.716		
	EE 1	0.876	0.735	0.892
	EE 2	0.913		
	EE 3	0.825		
	EE 4	0.825	0.733	0.845
	EE 5	0.886		
	EE 6	0.607		
	EE 7	0.770		
EE 8	0.761			
EE 9	0.751			
EE 10	0.700			
EE 11	0.749			
EE 12	0.764			
EE 13	0.693			
EE 14	0.731			
EE 15	0.744			
EE 16	0.769			
EE 17	0.713			
EE 18	0.734			
<i>Organizational Culture</i>	OC 1	0.763	0.692	0.931
	OC 2	0.893		
	OC 3	0.799		
	OC 4	0.866		
	OC 5	0.848		
	OC 6	0.813		
	OC 7	0.787		
	OC 8	0.871		
	OC 9	0.783		
	OC 10	0.761		

Moreover, the study assessed the discriminant validity by using an empirical standard to reflect how each construct was distinctive from the other constructs. Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method suggested for discriminant validity analysis has been used here (Henseler et al., 2015). The present value for this study was

found to maintain the stricter criterion of  $\geq 0.85$ . Henceforth, the discriminant validity standard has been established (see Table. 02).

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	HI HRM	EE	OC
HI HRM			
EE	0.265		
OC	0.242	0.637	
Mean	3.61	4.67	4.81
S.D	0.66	0.87	0.92

### Structural Model

A structural model has been developed by reviewing the hypothetical relationships among the variables. Following Table 3, the path from OC to employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.163$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) illustrates significant relationship. Moreover, the path from HI HRM to OC shows significant relation ( $\beta=0.193$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, the path from HI HRM to the outcome variable EE indicates the significant relationship having a value of ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) Table 3 shows the results of the hypothesized relationship.

Table 3: Result of Direct Effect

Direct Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-Value	P-value	Decision
HI HRM > Employee Engagement	0.274	0.045	5.58**	0	Supported
Organizational Culture> Employee Engagement	0.163	0.046	3.58**	0	Supported
HI HRM > Organizational Culture	0.193	0.049	4.02**	0	Supported

Additionally, this study determined how organizational culture influences HI HRM practices and employee engagement. The outcomes show a strikingly positive mediation impact of organizational culture on HI HRM procedures and employee engagement.

To increase the effectiveness of mediation, the confidential interval's upper and lower limit values shouldn't include zero (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). This study satisfies the need for a long-term mediation of organizational culture between HI HRM methods and employee engagement.

Table 4: Result of Indirect Effect

Indirect Path	Std. Bet.	Std. Erro	t-Value	95% LL	95% UL	P-value	Decision
HI HRM > OC > EE	0.032	0.011	2.87**	0.013	0.123	0.004	Supported

## 5. Discussion

In particular, the impact of HI HRM practices on employee engagement through organizational culture among the staff of private commercial banks operating within the banking industry of Bangladesh is the focus of this study. The study's findings are consistent with earlier research. The first theory regarding the connection between HI HRM practices and employee engagement was supported by the study's findings (EE).

The second hypothesis has also been supported; as there is a strong correlation between the two, HI HRM practices can support organizational culture. The result shows that when employees' skills and abilities are nurtured through HI HRM practices, the culture of that organization of that organization is likely to flourish. The results of the study confirmed the third hypothesis as well. In line with earlier studies, the latest findings revealed a considerable connection between company culture and employee engagement. A clearly defined organizational culture can have a significant impact on employee engagement in the current banking sector.

The fourth hypothesis in this study proposed that the association between HI HRM Practices and employee engagement is moderated by company culture. The outcome established the empirical mediation function of OC between HI HRM methods and employee engagement (EE).

## 6. Conclusion

The study finds a strong correlation between high-involvement HRM practices and employee engagement. The results of this study emphasize the notion that HI HRM practices can significantly increase employee engagement in Bangladesh's banking industry when they are developed in sync with an appropriate organizational culture setup. Focusing on practical implication, this study helps to develop a comprehensive idea about the dimensions of HI HRM practices, organizational culture, and employee engagement for the banking sector. Up terms of theoretical implications, it demonstrates how organizational culture fills in the gap between HI HRM practices and employee engagement. The study has some restrictions. For example, it used a cross-sectional technique whereas a longitudinal approach may have done this topic more justice. Apart from this, the study considered only ten measuring items for the mediator organizational culture whereas in many studies, this

mediator has been explored using extensive measures as well. However, since the specific aspect of HRM practices, high-involvement HRM particularly can contribute significantly for enhancing the engagement of employees in banking sector, it would be imperative to develop an appropriate organizational culture within which the proven mechanism can perform in a more sustainable manner. It might be a key factor in helping the banking industry recover from the disarray it has fallen into as a result of growing pressure from digitization and deregulatory measures, as well as the harm done to this sector by the global epidemic Covid-19.

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