Employer Branding a Strategic Tool for Talent Retention in Higher Education Institutions: Role of Employee Engagement and Organizational Transparency

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Talent retention is a growing concern of organizations, especially in service-intensive organizations. Employer branding plays a strategic role in talent management; however, a factually derived understanding of its predictors and outcomes remains less explored in higher education sector. Based on signaling theory and transparency theory, this study investigates the impact of perceived employer branding on talent retention in the higher education sector of Pakistan. Examining this relation, employee engagement was considered as a mediating variable; whereas, role of organizational transparency as a moderator between perceived employer branding and employee engagement was also incorporated. An adapted questionnaire was used and the conceptual framework was investigated through survey data of 394 respondents working in the higher education institutions within twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad). SmartPLS 3 software was used, and PLS-SEM two stage repeated measures approach was applied to assess the hypothesis. The results show that perceived employer branding has a positive and significant impact on talent retention, and employee engagement mediates the association between perceived employer branding and talent retention. However, the moderating role of transparency between perceived employer branding and employee engagement was not established. Theoretical and managerial implications are also discussed to assist policy makers.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, organizations are striving hard to deal with talent management issues. Service industry is found to be highly competitive, volatile, and full of challenges, especially when retention of talented workforce is concerned (John & P, 2020). In order to achieve organizational goals, a competitive workforce is a vibrant factor and organizations are facing "war of talent" (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008). Organizations strive for the best human capital and make strategies for the attraction and retention of such talent. In the education sector, faculty plays a vital role in the performance of the educational institute. Educational institutes frequently highlight their faculty as the core competency of the institute. However, retention of top-profile faculty members is a challenge for the institutes. Employer Branding emerged as a phrase in the early 1990s and considered an effective tool for attraction and retention of top talents (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018). The study of Iqbal et al. (2025) highlights the need for policymakers to adopt a multi-strategy approach that includes green finance, technological innovation, low-carbon energy, and supportive government programs. The participation of women in economic activities contributes to increased FDI. Furthermore, empirical evidence reinforces this positive relationship, indicating that industries with a higher concentration of female labor are more attractive for foreign direct investment Shaheen et al. (2024). In HRM discipline, the notion has been taken and implemented to attract, engage and retain employees in the same way as marketing professionals recall, attract, and retain their customers (Soemaryani, I., & Rakhmadini, D., 2013). Employer branding refers to "the differentiation of the firm's characteristics as an employer from its competitors, the employer as a brand highlights the unique aspects of the firm's employment offerings" (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). Employer branding is described as the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity (Theurer et al., 2018). Employer branding assists the organization in talent management practices; recruiting, attracting, and retaining top employees, and ensuring the industry's business plan and organizational objectives are met. The study of Ullah and Shaheen (2024) explores the relationship between sustainable finance and technological innovation, integrating the governance index and other economic indicators to assess their impact on sustainable development, particularly in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Vance (2006a) recognizes that employees engage in their jobs only when they feel satisfied with their work, feel valued, and have pride in their employer. It was also found that an employee can "go the extra mile" and perform the job with excellence only when they are engaged with their current job. Some researchers link employee engagement with intellectual and emotional commitment between an employee and its firm (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005).

Organizational transparency increases productivity by improving employee loyalty to the organization (Cucciniello & Nasi, 2014). Moreover, organizational transparency enhances employees' commitment and builds an attractive image among potential employees. Higher education sector is facing several talent management issues to survive in this cutthroat competition. Acquisition of talent in the face of 'skilled employees', and strong competition among institutions to involve the greatest individuals in the marketplace is currently a major concern for higher education (Tripathi et al., 2010). Although there is no shortage of qualified professionals, but quality top talent is scarce and difficult to retain as well (Harris & Farrell, 2007). Top talents, who have good knowledge, skills, and abilities, are always in-demand, and

often receive offers from competitive institutions. Apart from financial benefits, employees also consider non-financial factors, i.e., organizational image, corporate culture, and employer as a brand. According to studies, talented faculty have a favorable relationship with university performance, highlighting the need of effective talent management (Awan & Saeed, 2014; Azara & Mohammed, 2013)**.** Furthermore, it is linked with university transformation, knowledge management and academic climate which enhance educational performance of the university (Ramaditya et al., 2022).

Many educational institutions are unaware of talent management practices, which are still seen as a novel and untapped area despite its significance (Rudhumbu, 2014)**.** Previous studies focused on talent retention by focusing on general HR practices (Pandita & Ray, 2018). Mantongolo et al., (2018) suggested that employer branding attributes such as, reward strategy, people orientedness, and leadership development play a significant role in retention of employees in higher education institutions. These attributes are important for talent retention, but what makes an educational institution a brand was not discussed and yet to be explored. Another study explored the employee value proposition, which comes under the employer branding domain is associated with employee retention (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). It cannot be denied that organizations attain benefits from employer branding strategies, still this area is under explored (Ahmad et al., 2020; Khalid & Tariq, 2015). The aim of this research is to explore the role of employer branding toward favorable organizational outcomes, i.e. employee engagement and talent retention. Moreover, this research also aims to explore the moderating role of organizational transparency. Further it is investigated that does employee engagement mediates the relation between perceived employer branding and talent retention. To check this model, Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan has been chosen because this sector is facing serious issues regarding employees' engagement and talent retention. This research will contribute in employer branding literature by examining the variety of values that make an educational institute a brand and enhance the level of employee engagement and talent retention.

2. Literature review

2.1 Perceived Employer Branding

Employer branding strategy is composed of the amalgamation of different kinds of benefits and HR practices that create a joining and growth culture of an organization. Ambler and Barrow (Ambler & Barrow, 1996a) explained employer branding in the form of the benefits that an employee gains, i.e., "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". Employer branding proposed a lot of benefits like cost-effective use of resources, increased number of unsolicited and talented candidates, reduced lay-offs, greater levels of job satisfaction, committed potential personnel, and higher levels of organizational commitment (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Brands were used to distinguish products, but with the passing of time branding has been used for differentiating individuals, groups, places and organizations (Peter et al., 1999). Awareness can be created among employees about the uniqueness of an organization, including its structure, values, rules and how organization attract, inspire and retain its employees (Dell et al., 2001). External marketing is not only a way to increase and support its corporate brands, but it also promotes employment offerings as a way to attract a

pool of prospective applicants and retain its existing workforce (Schlager et al., 2011). Besides external marketing, internal promotion is also an imperative need of a firm because it plays a significant role in attaining those goals that are essential for ensuring company's success (Frook, J. E., 2001). Subsequently, internal branding is "the process of engaging employees in the branding process, which enables them to more successfully represent the brand's qualities to outside constituents" (Keller et al., 2011). The concept of branding has been recognized for many years as a famous positioning strategy in business (Härkönen, 2015).

This interdisciplinary study primarily explores the impact of institutional quality, particularly corruption levels, on the commercialization of innovation, as measured by high-tech product exports (Akbar et al., 2024). Schlager (2011) argues that there are five dimensions of EB. These dimensions of employer brand have been adopted for this research (Social, Economic, Reputation, and Development value). The concept of employer branding also complements HR practices to make this field a strategic partner for the organization. The existing workforce of any organization is the most valuable, transparent, and authentic source for any outsider and for all the stakeholders of the respective organization regarding the internal state of affairs of the firm (Chaudhuri & Biswas, 2018). Human Resource Management is mainly concerned with strong communication between the organization and its employees. The concept of employer branding originated by merging two theories namely "signaling theory" and "social identity theory" (Rosethorn, 2009). According to signaling theory, "all organizational activities are perceived as signals sent by the organization" (App et al., 2012). It is evident that employer branding serves the function of communication (Wendy et al., 2008). In view of the fact that employees do not have complete details about the intent of their organization, they select different organizational practices as an indicator that makes an organization a brand; considering it as signals of the organizational intent. By communicating those practices that help to develop an organization as a brand, the organization enables its employees to infer the indication of a substance-oriented understanding of the employment relationship (App et al., 2012).

The findings of Hussain et al. (2024) indicate that certain economies efficiently managed their health-oriented outputs, such as quality of life and mortality rates, while the majority exhibited strong economic performance. The study of Mahmood, A, Shaheen and Ullah (2024) utilized regression analysis to explore the relationship between dividend yield and air pollution, aiming to identify correlations between the variables and assess the impact of air pollution on dividend yield. The study seeks to examine the social and behavioral factors influencing the adoption and usage of digital banking apps among Pakistani citizens during the pandemic (Tariq et al., 2024). Social identity theory clarifies the relation between image of an employer brand and its ability to attract employees. It tends to state that individuals identify their abilities and qualities better when they are part of a certain group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). People associate themselves with the group that has similar likes and dislikes; consequently, they follow the rules, customs, and etiquette of that group (Catanzaro et al., 2010). It is evident that customers tend to follow the brand for which they have more affiliation due to its positive image (Foster et al., 2010). On the basis of previously described logic, social identity theory justifies the concept of employer branding; that is, people will prefer the group for which they have a strong positive image. In the same way, employees will try to find more reasons to retain

with an organization and identify it as a brand if they find some features of employer image more inspiring and affirmative (Santos & Miguel, 2019). The study aimed to explore the impact of advertising on children's attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles (Norin et al., 2024). In response to the increasing threat of global warming, academics and policymakers are examining the relationship between economic growth and environmental protection more closely (Mehroush et al., 2024). Previously, branding simply creates the image of a firm's products, but now researchers have recognized that the image of an organization can also be developed through the effort of employer branding (Foster et al., 2010). Branding that makes an organization as an employer of choice plays a significant role in the accomplishment of a workplace (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). In reality, jobs are made more attractive and captivating by employment branding. Symbolic functions have a dominant place in the marketplace as an alternative of limited functional variances between various brands (Richard et al., 2004).

2.2 Organizational Transparency

"In talks of accountability for business conduct, transparency has become a buzzword" (Koskela, 2018). Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) refer transparency as the perceived quality of information, which is a multidimensional construct comprised of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy. Organizational transparency is based on the principle that organizations should be more open and accountable to the stakeholders, particularly to the employees. Transparency is essential to maximize organizational productivity by improving employee loyalty to the organization (Cucciniello & Nasi, 2014). Transparency is ingrained in the culture of organizational governance, which refers to employees having access to information, processes, and strategies across the firm, allowing them to act creatively and independently on behalf of the company, it is also considered as an effective way of gaining stakeholders' confidence and loyalty (Fairbanks et al., 2007). Transparency as a condition refers to the amount to which a firm discloses information about its future goals with its members in order to build confidence among stakeholders, participate in informed decision-making, and encourage increased involvement in the organization. As suggested, transparent communication with stakeholders entails paying attention to more than simply traditional numbers like financial data, consumer statistics, and operational measures. Although, transparency has long been recognized as an important component of good governance and democratic politics (Hood & Heald, 2006), it was viewed as a "peripheral notion" to organizational theories until the late twentieth century, when it began to drag significance (Patel et al., 2002). Administrative accessibility was found to have an effect on employee attitudes in theory.

The study by Bilal and Shaheen (2024) indicates that technological innovation and natural resources support the adoption of energy efficiency strategies and environmental regulations, while green financial indicators significantly promote the transition to renewable energy sources. A study suggests that transparent organizational management maximizes employee commitment. However, it is possible that it may negatively impact employee commitment in some circumstances (Bratley & Alloysius, 2017). Transparency, diversity, and organizational trust have all lately been investigated and advocated as being advantageous to a company's bottom line and employee retention and happiness (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009). Transparency has been proven to increase a company's productivity by improving employee

loyalty to the organization (Cucciniello & Nasi, 2014). This study fills a gap in the existing literature by examining how demographic trends may affect the environmental impact of international trade (Shaheen et al., 2025).

2.3 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement concept emerged from the research work of Hackman et al., (1975). Employee engagement involves three conditions of psychological nature at workplace; meaningfulness, availability, and safety (Kahn, 1990). Vaijavanthi et. al., (2011) defined job engagement as positive and negative attachment of an employee to their work, colleagues and firm which greatly affects their motivation to learn and act at work. Studies found that when employees are psychologically attached to meaningful tasks in the workplace, they exhibit an attitude of engagement with their job (Kahn, 1990). Vance (2006b) explored that workers engage in their jobs only when they are satisfied with their work, feel valued in workplace, and have pride on their employer. Past studies show that an employee can "go the extra mile" and perform job with excellence only when they are engaged with their current job. Some researchers link employee engagement with intellectual and emotional commitment between an employee and its firm (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005). Furthermore, engaged employees are found to be healthier and happier, contribute to their own resources, and support an environment where engagement is transmittable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). From the above literature, it is recognized that employees' engagement has various characteristics and is a multifaceted construct. To illustrate these substances, engaged employees who add to their own resources self-confidence, support from colleagues, and feel higher levels of optimism. These affirmative elements construct elastic settings for a positive cycle on behalf of high engagement. This study examines sustainability considerations, including environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors, along with governmental policies and regulations that influence capital budgeting decisions (Shaheen et al., 2025). Engagement becomes transmissible between teams, as members use their affirmative energy leading to a motivated, team-oriented work environment. Where affiliates feed off each other's affirmative energy and perseverance to the work. To conclude, personnel engaged establish a good relationship with their employers, which become a main reason for showing positive intentions, attitudes, and behaviors at their workplace (Saks, 2006).

2.4 Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

2.4.1 Perceived Employer Brand and Employees Engagement

Hashim and Nor (2018) suggested that employer branding and employee engagement are directly linked. Employer engagement represents employee's attitude towards his/her work in an organization, which is a multifaceted concept. Employee engagement can be influenced by different factors e.g. organizational culture and its reputation, leadership styles adopted by managers, and communication system (Lockwood, 2007). In order to cultivate a culture of engagement among employees, human resource management should play its role in designing, implementing and monitoring supportive policies and practices (Lockwood, 2007). Another report unveiled ways in which various HR practices (comprising on performance management, recruitment, selection, compensation, training and job design) can increase employee

engagement (Vance, 2006b). In conclusion, internal employer branding management is a strong determinant that is positively linked with increased levels of work engagement among personnel (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). Many researchers have also established the link that when employees know the real value of the brand they are more likely to act positively and engage emotionally with the brand (Thomson et al., 1999). It is evident that a strong branding strategy can enhance a firm's ability to engage people along with its ability to attract potential applicants (Ambler & Barrow, 1996b; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Cascio (2014) explained that perceived employer brand is one of those strategies which can be utilized for retention of employees for longer time period by engaging them on job.

**2.4.2 Organizational Transparency and Employee Engagement**

Organizations that are transparent in their communication, experience higher engagement from all the stakeholders (Jiang & Shen, 2023). Transparency in human resource management practices enhance the employee engagement which is linked to organizational performance (Pasipamire, 2023). Studies also suggested that organizational transparency enhance job engagement and employee engagement (Ekin, 2019). In the education sector, a study found that organizational transparency practices in the schools enhance the work engagement (Abun et al., 2020). Kalkora and Lekule (2019) emphasized on organizational transparency in the higher education sector and found that provides a strong base for employer-employee relationship. However, the study was qualitative in nature and there is a need for quantitate studies to ensure generalizability.

2.4.3 Employer branding and Talent Retention

Employer branding makes an organization "employer of choice", which means that organization become a desirable place for the top talents (Russell & Brannan, 2016).There are two fundamental approaches that described talent; the first consider talent as widespread and regarded all employees as talented, but needed the largest options to strengthen their skills. The second strategy views talent as a worker with extraordinary traits who can produce diverse, creative, high-performing skills, capabilities and innovation in the subject (Becker et al., 2009; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Wilska (2014) defines the word talent as 'an individual who possesses specific characteristics, skills, education, experience, mindset, judgment, capability, and influence'. Whereas, according to Schiemann (2014), talent is an owner's selection of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, experience, behaviors, and distinctive actions. It is absurd for organizations to ignore the importance of retaining and attracting talented individuals in this era where employee skills and expertise are among the most important competitive enablers (Minchington, B., 2010; Prinsloo, 2008). Talent retention is an employer's endeavor to keep desirable employees in order to accomplish organizational goals. Organizations must focus on talent retention boosters to retain talented personnel. Few studies have supported the link between talent retention and employer branding in the higher education sector (Tutuncu & Kozak, 2007). However, effective talent attraction and retention remains a difficult issue for HR managers, including those in charge of higher education universities and colleges (Prinsloo, 2008). Two difficulties emerge while implementing employer branding techniques: the first is that what firms give as employer branding gimmicks varies from organization to organization, and the second is that companies work on employer branding as a whole, generally focusing

on external aspects such as organizational image, ignore insights and uniqueness of organization to encourage talent retention. Previous studies have not investigated the values which influence the perceptions of employees about the organization as an employer brand. These values are critical for retention of the employees, and this study aims to investigate that whether perceived employer brand values have an impact on employee retention in the educational sector.

Figure No 1: Conceptual Framework
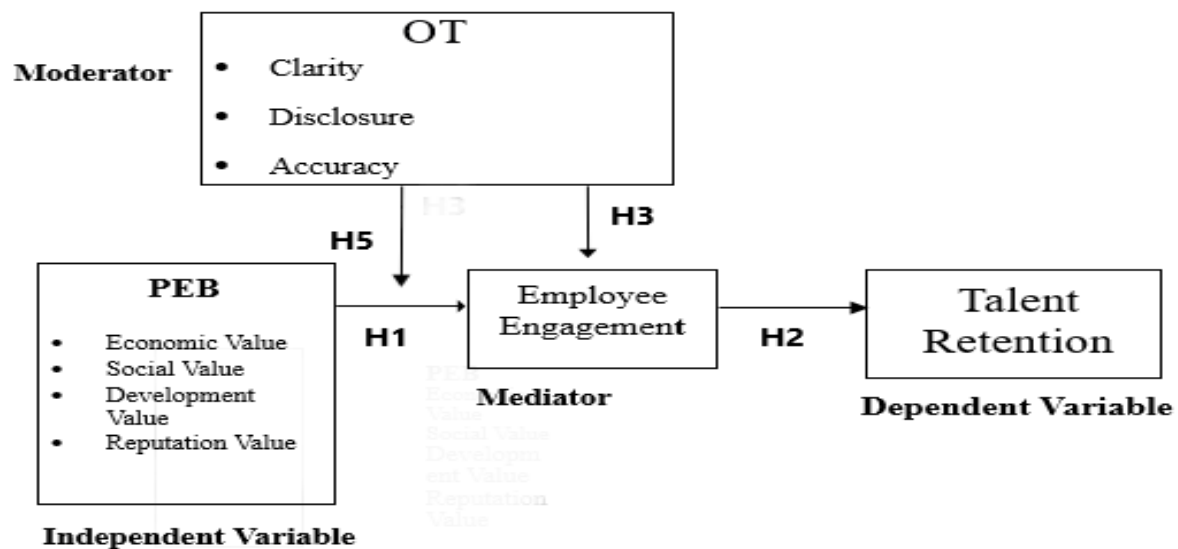
2.4.5 Research Hypothesis

H1: Perceived employer brand is positively associated with employee's engagement in Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan.

H2: Employee engagement is positively associated with talent retention at Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan.

H3: Organization transparency is positively associated with employee engagement in Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan.

H4: Employee engagement mediates the relation between perceived employer brand and talent retention in Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan.

H5: Organization transparency positively moderates the relationship of perceived employer brand and employee engagement in Higher Education Institutes of Pakistan.

3. Methodology

The study followed a quantitative research design, and a self-administered questionnaire adapted from literature was used for data collection. Five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree to strongly agree" was used to measure all items. Four dimensions of perceived employer branding (economic value, social value, development value, and reputation value) were measured through 20 items adapted from Schlager et al., (2011). Three dimensions of the moderating variable of organizational transparency (disclosure, clarity, and accuracy) were measured through 15 items adapted from Bozbayındır (2016).

Saks's (2006) 10-item scale was used to measure two dimensions of employee engagement (job engagement and organizational engagement). The dependent variable of talent retention was measured through 6-items scale adapted from Mai an Thuy (2021). Smart PLS 3 was used for data analysis because of its ability to measure complex models.

3.1 Data collection

According to Pakistan Economic Survey (2021-22), there are 218 recognized degree awarding institutions in Pakistan and around 58 thousand teachers are serving in these institutions. We opted for convenient sampling, a non-probability sampling technique due to the unavailability of sampling frame. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed in higher education institutions of Islamabad/Rawalpindi from September, 2022 to December, 2022. A total of 406 survey forms were retrieved and response rate was 96.6 percent. 12 survey forms were discarded during the data cleaning process, thus final sample size for the analysis was 394 respondents. In the survey, written information was provided to participants, stating that the collected data would be used solely for empirical research purposes. We assure them that their personal information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Furthermore, we assured that collected data will not be utilized for any commercial purposes. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and no personal information was collected. Data collection and analysis methods do not violate any employer or employee rights. The demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in table no 1. There were 43 percent male and 57 percent female participants. Majority of the participants belongs to the age bracket of 26 years to 41 years, which made 46 percent of the sample. Respondents belonged to category 20-25 formed 12.2 percent, 42- 57 years formed 26 percent, and 58- 67 years formed 15.6 percent. There were 210 participants from faculty and 174 participants from administration staff, which formed 54.7 percent and 45.3 percent respectfully.

Table No 1: Demographics

	Variables	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender	**Male**	165	43
	Female	219	57
	Total	384	100.0
Age	**20yrs- 25yrs**	47	12.2
	26 yrs-41yrs	177	46.1
	42yrs-57yrs	100	26.0
	58yrs-67yrs	60	15.6
	Total	384	100.0
Designation	**Faculty**	210	54.7
	Administration	174	45.3
	Total	384	100.0
Marital Status	**Single**	144	37.5
	Married	240	62.5
	Total	384	100.0
Experience	**0-2**	100	26.0
	3-5	102	26.6
	6-10	90	24.0
	Above 10	92	24.0
	Total	384	100.0

Moreover, 37.5 percent were singles who participated in the study, whereas 62.5 percent belonged to the married status. In terms of experience, sample have homogeneous composition. 100 people which formed 26.0% falls under the category of 0-2 years job experience. 102 people which formed 26.6% falls under the category of 3-5 years of job experience. 90 people which formed 23.4% falls under the category of 6-10 years of job experience. 92 people which formed 24.0% falls under the category of 10 and above that means they had a job experience of more than 10 years. Most of the respondents belonged to the level 3-5 as they make maximum percentage.

4. Results and Analysis

Data was examined using the partial least squares structured equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique of analysis followed by guidelines suggested by Hair (2017; 2021). The PLS is a second-generation technique that is recommended to estimate indicator loadings on constructions and the influence of losses between constructions in a complex model.

Figure No 2: PLS SEM Algorithm
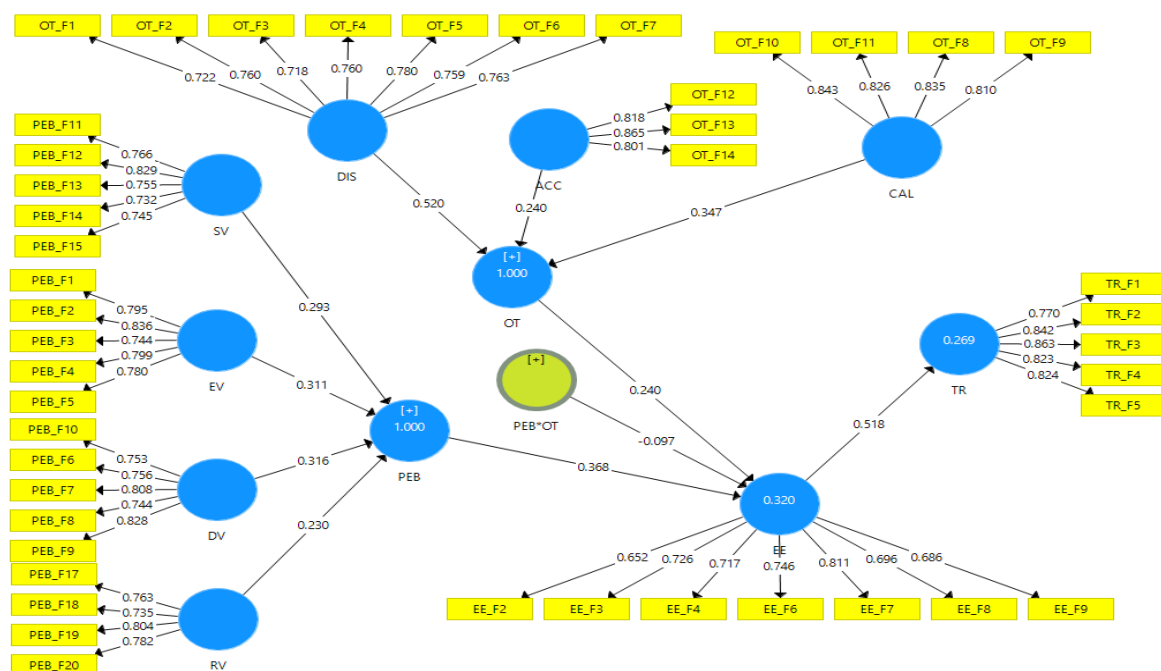
4.1 Measurement Model

Common method biasness (CMB) is a major concern in cross-sectional studies, which results in inflated path coefficients and multicollinearity issues. Due to CMB, respondents align their responses in a certain accepted way, which contaminate the results. To address CMB, we checked the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of all the observed and latent variables which were below the cutoff value of 3.3 (Kock, 2015). Thus, common method biasness and multicollinearity are not present in the data. Figure 2 shows a graphical representation of the measurement model analysis. Outer loadings of indicators in the respective constructs are above 0.7. In order to access validity and reliability of measurement model, this study followed

the guidelines suggested by Hair (2017)**.** Consideration was given to check the reliability of the measures by assessing Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extraction (AVE).

As shown in table 2, the values range from 0.847 to 0.872, which is above the recommended 0.7 threshold (Nunnally, J. C., 1994). In addition, converging validity demonstrates the degree to which multiple efforts to measures are related; Hair Jr et al. (2016) suggested using composite reliability, factor loadings, and mean variance extracted for checking convergent validity. The composite reliability ranges from '0.85 to 0.91' which corresponds to the recommended threshold of 0.7. All indicators were loaded exceeding the suggested value of 0.6. The mean variance extracted as the total amount of variation between the indications varies from 0.506 to 0.528 which is the specified threshold value of 0.5 by Hair et al. (2016).

Table No 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
ACC	"The Institute staff has information on rules and principles in our Institute" "Decisions concerning the Institute are announced to the Institute staff" "The Institute staff is informed about applications in our Institute"	0.771	0.773	0.868	0.687
CAL	"Why the Institute staff is awarded, is clear in our Institute" "The Institute staff keeps updating the accomplishments of the staff which are rewarded in our Institute" "Awards are distributed fairly in our Institute" "Grades concerning the Institute staff's performance are given with thorough reasoning in our Institute"	0.848	0.849	0.898	0.686
DIS	"There is an open communication which helps the Institute staff explain their views and suggestions in our Institute" "Implementations in our Institute are in concert with the decisions made by higher authorities" "Evaluations in our Institute are made with an understanding which informs the Institute staff" "Responsibilities of the Institute staff are clear in our Institute" "Distribution of the resources is supplied transparently in our Institute" "All of the Institute staff is evaluated fairly in our Institute" "Course schedules are prepared with the participation of all of the Institute staff in our Institute"	0.872	0.873	0.901	0.566

EE	"Sometimes I am so involved into my job that I lose track of time" "This job is all consuming and I am totally into it" "My mind often wanders and think about other things while doing my job" "Being a member of this Institute is very captivating" "One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this Institute" "I am really not into the "goings-on" in this Institute" "Being a member of this Institute make me come 'alive'."	0.845	0.854	0.883	0.519
DV	"I am highly engaged in this Institute" "Good internal training opportunities" "Good mentoring culture" "Room for creativity" "Empowering environment"	0.837	0.838	0.885	0.606
EV	"Good salary" "Good retirement benefits" "Fair amount of vacations" "Good health benefits" "High job security"	0.851	0.853	0.893	0.626
RV	"Good quality of services" "Well-known in general public" "Good reputation of the employer among friends" "Good employer organization to have on the resume"	0.773	0.773	0.854	0.595
SV	"Respectful environment" "Friendly relationship among individual co-workers" "Strong team spirit" "Competent co-workers" "Good managers/ supervisors/boss"	0.824	0.827	0.876	0.587
TR	"I always talk well about the organization I'm working with" "I have no intention of leaving this organization" "My work contributes to the development of the bank" "If I get an attractive job offer from elsewhere, I don't accept it" "I see my future in this organization"	0.882	0.885	0.914	0.681

Note: ACC=Accuracy, CAL= Clarity, DIS= Disclosure, DV= Development Value, EE=Employee Engagement, EV=Economic Value, RV= Reputation Value, SV=Social Value, TR=Talent Retention.

Discriminant validity is a critical quality criterion of the measurement model. Discriminant validity ensures that reflective items of constructs have a strong relationship within the construct in contrast to other constructs of the model (Hair et al., 2016). The discriminant validity results are presented in Table 3. We used two tests for discriminant

validity. First, cross loadings were assessed and items showed higher loading in the intended constructs (Hair, et al., 2016)**.** The results confirmed that all items fulfilled these conditions.

Table No 3: Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion

| Construct	ACC	CAL	DIS	DV	EE	EV	RV	SV	TR
ACC	**0.829**								
CAL	0.660	**0.829**							
DIS	0.674	0.756	**0.752**						
DV	0.362	0.366	0.361	**0.778**					
EE	0.384	0.387	0.377	0.459	**0.721**				
EV	0.288	0.388	0.385	0.712	0.436	**0.791**			
RV	0.347	0.358	0.343	0.663	0.469	0.595	**0.771**		
SV	0.341	0.343	0.377	0.731	0.426	0.655	0.658	**0.766**	
TR	0.152	0.243	0.212	0.299	0.518	0.358	0.362	0.277	**0.825**

Note: the figures highlighted represents the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the squared correlations. ACC=Accuracy, CAL= Clarity, DIS= Disclosure, DV= Development Value, EE=Employee Engagement, EV=Economic Value, RV= Reputation Value, SV=Social Value, TR=Talent Retention.

Secondly, the variance of constructions extracted or shared between constructions and elements should exceed the variance shared between construction and other constructions. As table 3 showed that diagonal values are AVE which are higher in their respective columns (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, reliability and validity of measurement model is established. The analysis followed repeated measures two stage approach Hair (2017), the latent scores of the variables were saved and carry forward for the structural model analysis.

4.2 Structural Model

The structural model represents the underlying theoretical path model, and its evaluation allows the researcher to determine how well the data supports the theory structural model was gauged through calculating the amount of variance identified by the independent variable and the altitudes of strength of paths; and the extent of similarity of each hypothesis to a specific structural model path. After establishing the discriminative and converging validity of the constructs, we checked the overall structural model.

Figure No 3: PLS Path Modeling
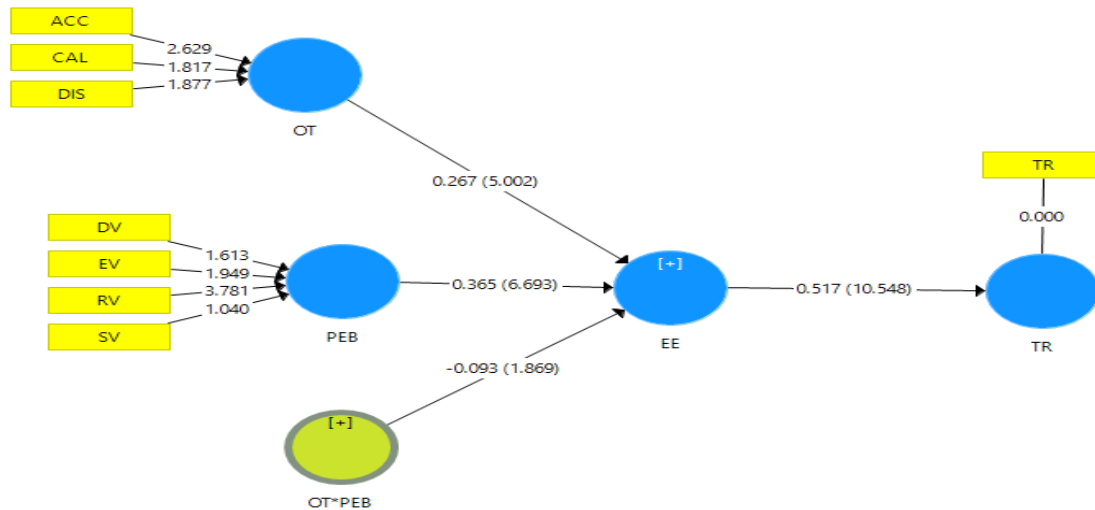
4.3 PLS Structural Model

Table No 4: PLS-SEM path Analysis

Construct	Path Coefficient	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Hypothesis
Direct Effect				
PEB -> EE	0.370	6.693	0.000	Supported
EE -> TR	0.516	10.548	0.000	Supported
OT -> EE	0.267	5.002	0.000	Supported
Mediation				
PEB -> EE -> TR	0.191	5.598	0.000	Supported
Moderation				
PEB*OT -> EE	-0.092	1.869	0.062	Not Supported

Table 4 shows synopsis of the path relationship of the model. The relationship between perceived employer branding and employee engagement is significant (β= 0.370; t = 6.693; p<0.05)' hence, hypothesis 1 is supported. The relationship between employee engagement and talent retention is highly significant (β= 0.516; t = 10.548; p<0.05), thus hypothesis 2 is also supported. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between organizational transparency and employee engagement (β= 0.267; t = 5.002; p<0.05), therefore, providing support for hypothesis 3. Additionally, the indirect effect (β= 0.191; t = 5.598; p<0.05) is also significant, thus mediating effect of employee engagement on perceived employer branding and talent retention is established, consequently, hypothesis 4 is supported. Lastly, interaction effect (OT*PEB) on employee engagement is insignificant (β=- 0.092; t = 1.869; p>0.05), thus moderating effect of organizational transparency on perceived employer branding and employee engagement is not established, therefore, not providing support for hypothesis 5.

.

Table No 5: Model fit indices

Fit index	Study	Recommended value	Source
SRMR	0.051	≤ 0.10 or of 0.08	Hu & Bentler (1999)
d_ULS	0.116	≥ 0.05	Henseler et al. (2016)
d_G1	0.079	> 0.05	Henseler et al. (2016)
NFI	0.913	≥ 0.9	Henseler et al. (2016)

Table 5 indicates the model fit indices. It is essential to explain the approximate model while conducting the model fit test. The only approximative model suitable for PLS trajectory modeling measurement is the standard root of the mean square residue (SRMR) and NFI. The SRMR represents the differences between the experiential correlation and the inferred template matrix. An SRMR value of below the 0.10 or 0.08 is considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The value of SRMR in current study is 0.051 and NFI 0.913 slightly greater. Thus, the proposed model fulfils the model fit indices.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

Employer branding is considered to be a strategic tool for internal marketing, which helps in achieving desired organizational outcomes, i.e., employee engagement, employee commitment, and employee retention (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). Employer branding phenomenon is not commonly adopted in educational institutions. Although, this industry is very competitive and institutions often struggle to keep talented faculty members, employer branding could play a vital role in talent retention. Current research contributes in this regard, as it studies the nature of employer branding on talent retention by taking data from higher education institutions and degree-awarding institution affiliated with HEC in Pakistan. This study investigated a theoretical framework to understand how perceived employer branding affects talent retention in higher education institutions. Perceived employer branding is comprised of economic, social, developmental and reputational value. Higher education institutions can build a strong 'employer brand' by categorically focusing on these values, which helps in talent retention. The proposed model is supported by the lenses of signaling theory, transparency theory, and social exchange theory. In this regard, the direct impact of perceived employer branding on talent retention, and the intervening role of employee engagement was also investigated. Organizational transparency has been considered as a contextual variable between perceived employer branding and employee engagement. According to the results, perceived employer branding would positively affect employee engagement, as previous studies also reported similar findings (Chawla, 2020; Rana & Sharma, 2019). Findings propose that perceived employer branding will create a positive image and increase employee engagement. Furthermore, this research identifies empirical evidence of considerable mediation of employee engagement for the indirect relationship between perceived employer branding and talent retention. Employer branding has become an essential competitive policy for almost every organization.

However, the answer to how and when employer branding will impact talent retention is yet to be explained. Therefore, this study considers employee engagement as a mediator. When organizations stress more on employer branding, it maximizes the attractive image and reputation of the organization among employees. It generates sense of belongingness and increases employee engagement (Hashim & Nor, 2018). Employee engagement is directly linked with talent retention along with other desired outcomes such as employee commitment, employee satisfaction and employee performance (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008). The results of this study support above mentioned argument. It reflects that employees' favorable opinion of the organization's branding enhances employee engagement and leads to talent retention. Organization's investment in perceived employer branding maximizes employee engagement due to employees' positive perception of the benefits that a branded employer provides. This positive impact of perceived employer branding on employee engagement assists in retaining competitive talent of the organization. Organization involvement in perceived employer branding motivates employees to acquire vigor, dedication, and absorption at the workplace. Further, it provides a sense of fulfillment by being a employee of a well-known branded employer.

5.1 Implications

Registrar office and HR department normally deal with talent management issues. The following practices can be implemented to build an attractive 'employer brand' with collaboration with the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) and the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC).

- Economic value is directly linked with salary which should be competitive, but there are some indirect economic benefits such as retirement benefits, medical facilities, and gratuity funds. Administration can also include performance bounces, i.e., best teacher and best researcher award.
- In terms of developmental value, administration should provide an empowering environment, good training opportunities, and a good mentoring culture. Moreover, provide better career growth opportunities in a transparent manner.
- To enhance social value, the administration should encourage friendly relationships between co-workers, promote team spirit, and provide a respectful environment for interpersonal relations. The administration has to encourage employees for academic collaborations and organize meet-greet sessions for extra crucial activities.
- The reputation of a firm refers to the collective judgments about the firm's overall character based on past actions of an employer. Therefore, the reputation of the firm relates to its good standing among potential and current talent, renowned products, and having a good brand on one's CV. Moreover, the reputation of a company is also built up by having a positive image and a strong identity in the marketplace with the help of media collaboration and social media presence.
- Organizational transparency in terms of rewards and growth opportunities should be provided. Moreover, policies and procedures should be communicated properly, and knowledge hiding should be discouraged

The current study established that perceived employer branding helps in talent retention via enhancing employee engagement. Moreover, organizational transparency also has a direct and significant effect on employee engagement in higher education institutions. However, moderating effect of organizational transparency not established in this study and needs further exploration.

6. References

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