

Contextualizing HRM Practices and Socioemotional Climate: Evidence from Jordanian Pharmaceutical Sector

Nadera Hourani

Assistant professor, Human Resource Department, College of business, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, 21589, Saudi Arabia, E-mail: nalhourani@kau.edu.sa

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices on shaping the socioemotional climate in culturally conservative organizations, with a focus on Tabuk Pharmaceutical Company in Jordan for the year 2023. Drawing on Organizational Support Theory (OST) and Institutional Theory, the research investigates how four HRM practices (i.e., leadership support, career development, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and work-life balance) impact job satisfaction, emotional support, and employee engagement in a hierarchical, collectivist setting. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data was collected from 250 employees across five departments through a validated Likert-scale and adapted for cultural relevance. The survey achieved an 83.3% response rate, with stratified sampling ensuring representation by gender and role. Statistical analysis revealed weak and non-significant correlations between HRM practices and socioemotional outcomes. For example, leadership support showed no significant association with job satisfaction ($r = -0.03$) or engagement ($r = -0.08$). These findings highlight a disjunction between formally structured HRM practices and their emotional resonance in high power-distance cultures. This disjunction is conceptualized as “support without resonance”, where technically sound Human Resources (HR) strategies fail to foster commitment due to cultural misalignment. The study contributes to theoretical debates on High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) by challenging their universality and advocating for culturally grounded HR models. The research holds practical value for HR leaders in the MENA region by encouraging adaptations rooted in moral authority, collective justice, and relational norms. Its originality lies in clarifying how emotional legitimacy, not procedural design, determines HRM success in non-Western institutional landscapes.

Keywords: Career Development, Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Leadership Support, Work-life Balance

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1. Introduction

Modern Human Resource Management (HRM) has evolved beyond operational efficiency to encompass psychological well-being, emotional engagement, and employee perceptions of fairness and support. As firms strive to sustain performance in knowledge-driven economies, socioemotional conditions, such as relational climate, perceived support, and psychological safety, have emerged as key antecedents of commitment, retention, and innovation. These relational outcomes are shaped by both formal HR practices and the informal norms embedded in organizational culture.

Nevertheless, research in this domain has largely adopted an empirical focus on Western, individualistic, low-power-distance societies. These contexts assume autonomy, voice, and fairness as universal principles that serve as motives to individuals. Challenges arise when applying these assumptions across contexts of hierarchical authority, collectivist social relations, and where legitimacy is predominantly moral rather than procedural. It then becomes essential to examine how institutional structures and cultural values mediate the export of HRM practices and their interpretation, particularly in an increasingly fluid global landscape. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, in particular, poses an unusual institutional challenge to HRM models drafted in the Global North, with its clashing tribal affiliations, religious morality, and bureaucratic formality. The scientific problem this paper addresses is whether HRM systems accepted in the literature for satisfying work arrangements that share engagement and emotional support gain effective legitimacy when implemented in high power-distance collectivistic societies. Addressing this question requires an integrated theoretical lens that recognizes both perceived organizational support and the influence of deep-seated cultural schemas.

2. Literature Review

The socioemotional climate of an organization encompasses the emotional tone, psychological safety, and relational quality that employees experience. It has become a crucial factor in engagement, retention, and well-being (Gelade and Ivery, 2003; Korff et al., 2017). As HRM transitions from an administrative function to a strategic partnership, its role in shaping socioemotional outcomes has attracted growing scholarly interests. This review addresses the journal's expectation for theoretical clarity and contextual relevance by integrating Organizational Support Theory (OST) and Institutional Theory as articulated in Scott's foundational work on institutional pillars and organizational behavior (Scott, 2008). It examines how formal HRM practices may fail to elicit the intended emotional outcomes in contexts such as Jordan, thereby highlighting a critical gap in cross-cultural HRM theorizing.

2.1. HRM Systems and Cultural Mediation of Support

OST suggests that employees develop global perceptions of how much the organization values them based on HRM signals such as supportive leadership, inclusion efforts, and development opportunities (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). In high-performance work systems, these signals promote affective commitment and engagement, but only when viewed as culturally legitimate (Serhan et al., 2024). This aligns with evidence that HR development strategies are more successful in fostering commitment when embedded within a strong organizational culture marked by trust and communication (Inanlou and Ahn, 2017). In Jordan and other Arab cultures, perceptions of HRM authenticity are influenced by local expectations of moral responsibility and authority (Adaileh, 2023) and by the alignment of support practices with well-being-centered institutional values (Al-Oun and Al-Khasawneh, 2025). Chabika et al. (2024) further emphasize how power distance and uncertainty avoidance shape employees' reactions to HRM signals. These findings support that power distance affects ethical sensitivity and whistleblower behavior, influencing how socioemotional climates are interpreted in organizations (Suyanto et al., 2024). Therefore, based on this body of literature, the study proposes the following Hypothesis, H1: Leadership support is positively associated with employee engagement.

Although transformational leadership generally boosts morale and trust (Kim and Cruz, 2022; Karimi et al., 2023), its effect in high power-distance cultures (e.g., Jordan) depends on delivering what employees deem paternalistic benevolence rather than autonomy (Aycan, 2005; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2016). Studies by Mehmood et al. (2024) and Pan (2024) demonstrate that leadership behaviors may compromise psychological safety when they are misaligned with institutional expectations. Moreover, Oorschot et al. (2021) emphasize that leadership perceptions have a direct impact on psychological contracts under conditions of contextual ambiguity.

2.2. Institutional Constraints on Work-Life Balance and DEI

Work-life initiatives, often seen as empathetic HRM in Western contexts, can be perceived as symbolically weak in cultures where gender roles, social expectations, and family priorities dominate (Chuang and Liao, 2010; Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner, 2014; Bhatti et al., 2022). Recent evidence from the Asian context supports this view, indicating that flexible schedules only resonate culturally when embedded within gender-sensitive frameworks (Badrolhisam and Jamil, 2025). Alkhawashki et al. (2024) further observed adverse socioemotional repercussions resulting from remote work when cultural expectations were not accurately considered.

DEI efforts, often framed within individualistic paradigms (Newman et al., 2016; Firfiray et al., 2018), may be perceived as superficial unless rooted in communal justice, cultural identity, and spiritual inclusion. Research by Serhan et al. (2024) reinforces the notion that institutional change requires a deep cultural alignment. Bardach et al. (2024) demonstrated that diversity climates only foster well-being when they align with in-group norms. Similarly, Ayele et al. (2024) found that perceived authenticity of DEI efforts, rather than their structural presence of DEI, determines its socioemotional impact. Barach (2024) further identified that employees only embrace inclusion when DEI practices synchronize with organizational and cultural identities. Based on these insights, the study proposes H2: Work-life balance practices are positively associated with perceived emotional support, and H3: DEI initiatives are positively associated with job satisfaction, contingent on perceived authenticity.

2.3. Justice, Career Development, and Informal Norms

Organizational justice is pivotal for fostering trust and satisfaction; however, its interpretation is heavily dependent on cultural context. In many settings, values such as loyalty and discretion often outweigh fairness as procedurally defined in formal policy (Griffith, 2006). This is evident in Jordan, where informal mechanisms like *wasta* prevail over formal career systems (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2016). Stor (2024) further demonstrated that HRM is often ineffective without an informal recognition of social influence structures. Adamovic et al. (2023) reinforced this dynamic, demonstrating that in collectivist cultures, career systems must be perceived as procedurally just and contextually aligned with cultural values. Santana and Harjanto (2023) observed that professional development programs in high power-distance settings failed in the absence of clear communication regarding goals and advancement criteria. This is echoed in research showing that HR policies aimed at socioemotional wealth can enhance organizational performance, especially in value-driven or familial firms (Peláez-León and Sánchez-Marín, 2022). Al-Twal et al. (2024) assert that the perceptions of justice are ultimately shaped by relational substitutability, that is, the degree to which informal norms are integrated into formal systems. Building on this foundation, the present study proposes Hypothesis 4, H4: Career development opportunities are positively associated with affective commitment.

2.4. Theoretical Gaps and Contextual Framework

Despite robust research on HRM outcomes, the majority of studies remain rooted in an individualistic, egalitarian societal context. Consequently, contextual analyses remain limited in the MENA region. Scholars call for methodological redress and cultural embedding (Cooke, 2018). Agile HR frameworks offer a blueprint for adaptive HRM. Several recent studies

have emphasized the importance of organizational agility and contextual sensitivity (Pathomphattaphan et al., 2023; Flynn and Blumberg, 2024). These lines of research support the shift from standardized HRM packages to contextually embedded systems that reflect local norms and hierarchies.

Drawing from this literature, this study hypothesizes:

- H1: Leadership support is positively associated with employee engagement.
- H2: Work-life balance practices are positively associated with perceived emotional support.
- H3: DEI initiatives are positively associated with job satisfaction, contingent on perceived authenticity.
- H4: Career development opportunities are positively associated with affective commitment.

This lays the groundwork for exploring “support without resonance” and tests how cultural alignment affects the emotional interpretation of HRM practices.

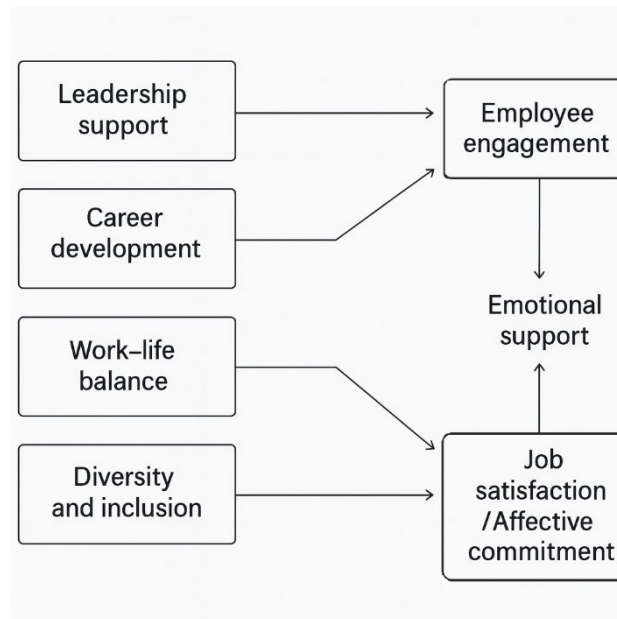


Fig 1. Conceptual framework of HRM practices and socioemotional outcomes moderated by collectivist values and high power-distance culture

The literature indicates that while HRM practices such as leadership support, DEI, and career development are well-supported in Western contexts, their emotional and motivational impacts in hierarchical, collectivist cultures remain insufficiently understood. Frameworks such as OST and Institutional Theory offer valuable analytical perspectives but require greater cultural adjustment to adequately address regional complexities. Moreover, few empirical studies have explored how cultural values, such as power distance and collectivism, influence the psychological reception of HR practices in the MENA region.

To address this gap, the current study examines the influence of four specific HRM practices, leadership support, career development, diversity and inclusion (DEI), and work-life balance, on key socioemotional outcomes, namely job satisfaction, emotional support, and employee engagement, within the culturally conservative context of Jordan’s pharmaceutical sector. Additionally, the study explores how these relationships are moderated by high power distance and collectivist values, investigating whether technically robust HRM systems can achieve emotional resonance in hierarchical institutional settings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey method to explore the connection between HRM practices and socioemotional results within a culturally conservative organizational setting. The research focused on Tabuk Pharmaceutical Company in Jordan, selected due to its structured HR systems and hierarchical institutional culture. The design enabled the collection of data at a single time point across various job levels and departments. While this limits causal inference, it provides an essential snapshot of how HRM practices are interpreted in relation to cultural values.

3.2. Sampling and Power Analysis

The target population comprised approximately 500 employees across five departments: production, administration, marketing, research and development, and sales.

A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to guarantee representation across gender, department, and organizational role. A total of 250 complete responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 83.3%. G*Power

3.1.9.7 was utilized to calculate the minimum sample size necessary to identify a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) with a 95% power level and $\alpha = 0.05$, leading to a required sample size of 129. The gathered sample size was thus statistically sufficient.

3.3. Instrument Development and Localization

The survey tool used in this research was adapted from established and validated measures of HRM practices and employee socioemotional outcomes. Leadership support was assessed using items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Career development was measured using a scale adapted from Kehoe and Wright (2013), and work-life balance was evaluated using instruments developed by Chuang and Liao (2010). Perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) were captured using the tool developed by Newman et al. (2016). All items were presented using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

To ensure contextual sensitivity and cultural appropriateness, a pilot study was conducted with 15 employees from various departments of the participating organization. Feedback from these participants helped refine terminology, particularly in areas sensitive to Jordanian organizational culture, including hierarchical language, perceptions of gender, and modes of leadership expression. Following this pilot, the survey was translated from English to Arabic and then back-translated to English to ensure conceptual consistency across languages. Additionally, three experienced HR professionals reviewed the final version to assess its face and contextual validity.

The finalized survey incorporated all cultural and linguistic refinements informed by the pilot study and expert reviews. Although the full survey is not publicly available due to proprietary constraints, researchers interested in reviewing it for academic purposes may request access from the corresponding author, who retains the complete survey and detailed documentation of all adaptation procedures.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to internationally recognized research ethics protocols and institutional policies for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the university's Institutional Review Board prior to gathering data. All participants were made aware that their involvement was voluntary and that there would be no penalties or consequences for declining or withdrawing.

To ensure anonymity among participants, no personally identifiable information (PII) such as names, employee IDs, or contact details was collected. Survey responses were coded numerically and stored in a password-protected database accessible only to the research team. To prevent deductive disclosure, especially in small departmental groups, demographic data was aggregated at the reporting stage.

All participants provided verbal informed consent prior to participating in the interview. Each participant would receive a verbal and written script detailing the study's purpose, ensuring that their responses remain confidential, with an option to withdraw from the study at any moment. Verbal agreement was confirmed from each respondent before proceeding with the survey.

The survey was conducted independently of managerial structures to maintain impartiality throughout the study. Department heads were not involved in recruitment selection, while invitations to participate were circulated by neutral HR persons and secure online links to ensure that employees did not feel pressured to participate or respond with socially desirable answers.

3.5 Mitigation of Common Method Bias (CMB)

Considering the reliance on self-reported data gathered via a single survey tool, attempts were made to reduce the impact of common method bias (CMB), which can either amplify or obscure relationships among constructs: Procedurally, a clear separation was made overtly between predictors and outcome variables to assure a psychological separation, whereby participants would not feel the need to align answers across sections from two constructs consciously. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous to prevent socially desirable responses. Reverse-coded items were included in the instrument to address concerns related to response patterns, helping respondents avoid falling into response biases. After collecting the data, the potential for a CMB was statistically reviewed using Harman's single-factor test. Findings indicated that the initial unrotated factor explained just 29.8% of the variance, which is considerably lower than the typical benchmark of 50%, suggesting that standard method variance was probably not a major risk to the integrity of the results.

3.6 Measurement Reliability and Construct Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs measured, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each subscale. The reliability coefficients were all within acceptable ranges: leadership support (.88), career development (.84), work-life balance (.81), DEI (.79), job satisfaction (.86), emotional support (.82), and employee engagement (.85). These values reflect strong internal consistency across constructs. Construct validity was additionally assessed via exploratory factor analysis (EFA), employing principal axis factoring and varimax rotation. The analysis produced a solution with six factors that accounted for 67.4% of the overall variance, with all items loading onto their respective factors (loading values exceeding 0.60). This statistical evidence confirmed that the scales used were not only reliable but also captured distinct and theoretically meaningful dimensions of HRM practices and socioemotional outcomes in the study context.

3.7 Analytical Strategy

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were used to examine bivariate relationships. Various regression models were employed to evaluate the predictive impacts of HRM practices on each of the three outcomes (job satisfaction, emotional support, and engagement), while controlling for demographic

variables. Interaction terms were included to examine potential moderation of cultural variables, these moderators were not modeled as latent constructs. One-way ANOVA was also used to test role-based differences.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was .89, and Bartlett's test of sphericity showed significance ($\chi^2 = 1486.34$, $p < .001$), confirming appropriateness for multivariate analysis.

3.8 Non-Response Bias

To assess non-response bias, responses from early and late participants were compared using chi-square and t-tests across gender, department, and job level. No significant differences were found. Moreover, the demographic distribution of respondents closely matched company HR records, providing support for internal representativeness.

4. Results

This section presents the empirical findings from the employee survey conducted at Tabuk Pharmaceutical Company in Jordan. The results are structured to provide a comprehensive and systematic overview of the data analysis process and outcomes, including hypothesis testing, statistical evaluations, and interpretive narratives associated with key respondent characteristics and HRM-outcome relationships.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Demographics

Table 1 presents the age distribution of survey respondents, which demonstrates a balanced demographic sample. The distribution spans multiple age groups, with the highest representation from the 26–35 and under-25 categories, supporting generational diversity in responses.

Table 1. Age Distribution of Survey Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent (%)
Under 25	57	22.8
26–35	59	23.6
36–45	44	17.6
46–55	44	17.6
56 and above	46	18.4

Table 2 details gender distribution, showing that 35.2% identified as female, 28.8% as male, and 36% chose not to disclose their gender, potentially reflecting cultural discomfort with gender disclosure in the Jordanian work context.

Table 2. Gender Representation Among Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Female	88	35.2
Male	72	28.8
Prefer not to say	90	36.0

Table 3 summarizes the departmental affiliations, indicating a broad cross-section of functions, including production, administration, marketing, R&D, and sales. This ensures that the HRM perceptions reflect various organizational roles.

Table 3. Departmental Distribution of Respondents

Department	Frequency	Percent (%)
Administration	40	16.0
Marketing	38	15.2
Production	43	17.2
Research and Development	55	22.0
Sales	42	16.8
Other	32	12.8

Table 4 outlines the respondents by role, with mid-level and senior-level employees comprising the majority. This indicates that the data capture perspectives of both managerial and entry-level employees.

Table 4. Respondents by Organizational Role

Role	Frequency	Percent (%)
Entry-level	53	21.2
Executive	52	20.8
Mid-level	72	28.8
Senior-level	73	29.2

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 5 summarizes the Pearson correlation coefficients between the four HRM practices and the three socioemotional outcomes. All relationships are statistically weak and non-significant, indicating limited predictive power. Notably, DEI and career development exhibit a weak but significant correlation ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Correlation Matrix of HRM Practices and Socioemotional Outcomes

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leadership Support	1					
2. Career Development	-0.07	1				
3. Diversity and Inclusion	-0.09	0.13*	1			
4. Job Engagement	-0.08	0.01	0.02	1		
5. Job Satisfaction	-0.03	0.02	-0.10	0.04	1	
6. Emotional Support	0.01	0.05	0.09	0.03	0.02	1

*Note: $*p < 0.05$.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing and Regression Models

The study employed multiple regression analysis to evaluate the six proposed hypotheses, with demographic variables (age, gender, tenure, and department) included as controls to account for their potential confounding effects. The hypotheses aimed to assess how specific HRM practices relate to key socioemotional outcomes in a culturally conservative organizational context.

H1: Leadership support is positively associated with employee engagement. Not supported: The standardized regression coefficient was negative and non-significant ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = .490$), suggesting that perceived leadership support did not enhance engagement among employees in this setting. This outcome may reflect measurement limitations, such as the inability of standardized survey instruments to fully capture paternalistic leadership styles, or unobserved moderators such as trust in authority, which were not directly modeled.

H2: Work-life balance is positively associated with emotional support. Not supported: The analysis revealed a non-significant relationship ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = .611$), indicating that work-life balance policies did not translate into perceived emotional support. A potential explanation is that cultural expectations around family and gender roles act as hidden moderators, shaping how employees interpret formal flexibility policies.

H3: DEI initiatives are positively associated with job satisfaction, contingent on perceived authenticity. Not supported: Although theoretically plausible, DEI efforts did not yield a significant association with job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = .381$), possibly reflecting cultural misalignment in how inclusivity is framed and perceived. This finding suggests that DEI policies, when framed in Western-individualistic terms, may lack resonance in collectivist contexts. Alternative mediators, such as communal identity or moral legitimacy, could be necessary to detect significant effects.

H4: Career development is positively associated with affective commitment. Not supported: The statistical output showed a weak and insignificant effect ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = .733$), suggesting that formal career development programs were not seen as credible signals of organizational investment in employee growth. This may be due to the unmeasured influence of informal advancement channels (e.g., *wasta*), which operate as stronger determinants of perceived fairness and career legitimacy in the Jordanian context.

Overall, while none of the hypotheses were supported, these null results are themselves instructive. They indicate that technically robust HRM practices may not generate socioemotional outcomes in high power-distance, collectivist settings unless mediated or moderated by cultural mechanisms not captured in this study. Rather than invalidating the research, these findings contribute to the knowledge base by identifying context-specific disjunctions between formal HRM practices and employee perceptions.

Table 6 presents the full regression coefficients and significance levels, reaffirming that none of the primary HRM predictors had a statistically meaningful impact on job satisfaction in this culturally nuanced context. These findings highlight the concept of “support without resonance,” where technically sound HR practices fail to generate desired outcomes when not aligned with institutional norms or cultural expectations.

Table 6. Multiple Regression Results Predicting Job Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	95% CI
Constant	3.39	0.28	—	12.27	.000	[2.84, 3.94]
Leadership Support	-0.04	0.06	-0.05	-0.69	.490	[-0.16, 0.07]
Career Development	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.34	.733	[-0.10, 0.13]
DEI	-0.06	0.06	-0.06	-0.88	.381	[-0.18, 0.05]
Work-Life Balance	-0.03	0.06	-0.03	-0.51	.611	[-0.14, 0.09]
Age (control)	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.26	.793	[-0.04, 0.06]
Gender (control)	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.46	.645	[-0.05, 0.08]
Tenure (control)	-0.03	0.03	-0.04	-0.95	.342	[-0.10, 0.03]
Department (control)	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.25	.801	[-0.05, 0.06]

4.4 Multicollinearity and ANOVA Diagnostics

Table 7 shows that multicollinearity is not a concern, with all variance inflation factors (VIF) well below 5.

Table 7. ANOVA Results for Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance Across Roles

Outcome	F	p	η^2
Job Satisfaction	1.05	.371	.013
Work-Life Balance	0.33	.803	.004

Table 8 presents ANOVA comparisons of socioemotional outcomes across organizational roles. No statistically significant differences were found in job satisfaction or work-life balance across groups.

Table 8. ANOVA Results for Socioemotional Outcomes by Organizational Role

Outcome	F	p	η^2
Job satisfaction	1.05	.371	.013
Work-life balance	0.33	.803	.004

4.5 Hypothesis Summary

Table 9 provides a consolidated view of all hypothesis outcomes, clearly showing which hypotheses were empirically supported or not.

Table 9. Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Description	Empirical Outcome
H1	Leadership support is positively associated with employee engagement	Not supported
H2	Work-life balance is positively associated with emotional support	Not supported
H3	DEI initiatives are positively associated with job satisfaction, contingent on perceived authenticity	Not supported
H4	Career development is positively associated with affective commitment	Not supported

5. Discussion

The empirical results of this study reveal a striking disconnect between formal HRM initiatives and their intended emotional impact, challenging the widespread assumption that structurally sound HR practices automatically foster socioemotional outcomes. Despite implementing leadership support, DEI, work-life balance measures, and career development programs,

employees at Tabuk Pharmaceutical Company did not report increases in job satisfaction, engagement, or emotional support. We conceptualize this mismatch as “support without resonance,” highlighting the failure of technical HR systems to engender meaningful emotional responses when they conflict with the cultural and institutional logics of the environment.

This disconnect aligns closely with the theoretical foundations laid out in the literature review. Organizational Support Theory (OST) highlights the significance of employees believing that their organization appreciates their efforts and is concerned about their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kehoe and Wright, 2013). However, in high power-distance, collectivist cultures like Jordan, symbolic gestures such as transformational leadership may be interpreted as thin or inauthentic unless they align with culturally embedded expectations of paternalistic benevolence (Aycan, 2005; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2016). The non-significant findings for H1–H4 underscore this tension. Rather than invalidating the study, these null results suggest that cultural filters, unobserved moderators (e.g., trust in authority, communal belonging), and measurement limitations (e.g., survey tools developed in Western contexts) may have muted expected effects. Cross-cultural findings further suggest that power distance shapes how employees interpret structural inequality, influencing legitimacy and fairness perceptions (Kusano et al., 2024). In fact, Mehmood et al. (2024) and Pan (2024) demonstrate that misaligned leadership interventions can reduce psychological safety, a finding echoed by our non-significant results for leadership support and engagement.

Similarly, DEI initiatives rooted in Western individualistic assumptions did not enhance job satisfaction. This is consistent with recent findings that diverse climates only contribute to well-being when grounded in collective identity or spiritual narratives (Bardach et al., 2024; Ayele et al., 2024). This reinforces the views shared in the literature review on cultural misalignment and inclusion programs (Serhan et al., 2024; Chabika et al., 2024).

Work-life balance initiatives also did not improve emotional support, mirroring Alkhawashki et al. (2024), who found that flexibility measures can backfire in cultures that perceive them as culturally misaligned or as undermining traditional family roles. Finally, the ineffectiveness of career development programs echoes existing work on *wasta* and informal influence (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2016; Stor, 2024), suggesting that merit-based opportunities may be dismissed if they do not interface with unofficial networks or contribute to ceremonial recognition.

By applying Institutional Theory, we emphasize that it is not just the presence of HRM practices that matters, but their cultural legitimacy, the symbolic fit between policy and practice within local norms. While high-performance work systems are widely praised, scholars like Cooke (2018) and Flynn and Blumberg (2024) argue that such systems require careful cultural calibration. As illustrated in Figure 1, our findings contribute to this debate by showing that unsupported hypotheses can themselves reveal boundaries of theory, identifying where HRM practices fail to achieve cultural legitimacy.

These findings make several important contributions. They refine OST by demonstrating that perceived organizational support may not translate into affective commitment when it conflicts with deep-seated cultural values. They also reinforce critiques of universal HPWS frameworks, advocating for context-sensitive models that integrate institutional analysis. Practically, the null results caution HR leaders that simply importing global HRM practices may not yield socioemotional benefits unless cultural mediators such as trust, recognition, and communal belonging are incorporated.

Although grounded in Jordan, the implications extend to global HRM practice. The notion of “support without resonance” is transferable to other hierarchical or collectivist economies (e.g., South Asia, East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa), where cultural filters may similarly weaken the emotional credibility of HRM practices. Even in individualistic contexts, practices that are perceived as overly ceremonial or disconnected from local values may fail to resonate. This underscores the broader lesson that HRM frameworks must be carefully adapted to cultural and institutional contexts, and that technical robustness alone cannot ensure socioemotional legitimacy.

Ultimately, the narrative emerging from this study is one of cultural dissonance. When HRM systems operate without symbolic alignment, they may be viewed as hollow, performative, or even inconsistent with organizational values. Thus, even though H1–H4 were unsupported, the study advances HRM scholarship by identifying context-specific barriers and guiding future research toward unobserved cultural mechanisms.

6. Conclusion

This study sets out to examine how culturally situated human resource management (HRM) practices influence socioemotional outcomes such as employee engagement, job satisfaction, and emotional support within a hierarchical and collectivist context. By focusing on the Jordanian pharmaceutical sector, the research aimed to assess the effectiveness of four specific HRM interventions, leadership support, career development, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and work-life balance.

The findings revealed statistically non-significant relationships between the HRM practices and the intended socioemotional outcomes. Despite theoretical support from models such as the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework and Organizational Support Theory (OST), the results showed that formal HRM signals lacked emotional resonance. For example, leadership support failed to significantly predict employee engagement, and DEI practices were not associated with job satisfaction, even when controlling for demographics.

From these findings, the study draws the conclusion that HRM systems, no matter how technically robust, may not generate positive emotional responses if they are culturally misaligned. In settings like Jordan, where authority, trust, and justice are filtered through informal and relational lenses, HRM frameworks must go beyond procedural validity to achieve effective legitimacy. The study offers the original concept of “support without resonance” to capture this cultural disconnect, where well-intended organizational support fails to inspire employee trust or commitment.

Importantly, the unsupported hypotheses (H1–H4) did not invalidate the study. Instead, they provide valuable evidence that HRM practices can lose effectiveness when cultural mediators or moderators are not accounted for. These null results contribute to the HRM knowledge base by identifying boundaries of theory and highlighting context-specific dynamics that global models often overlook.

Future studies should investigate cultural factors, such as power distance and collectivism, as potential influences on HRM outcomes, using validated psychometric instruments. Moreover, qualitative approaches such as ethnographic interviews or discourse analysis could uncover how employees symbolically interpret HRM practices in institutional settings. Scholars are encouraged to develop locally grounded HRM models that incorporate informal norms (e.g., *wasta*), religious ethics, and community values to enhance cultural congruence. This would not only advance theoretical frameworks like OST and Institutional Theory but also inform more adaptive and emotionally credible HRM strategies in non-Western economies.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the College of Business, King Abdulaziz University (No. 9/23, 13 March 2023; decision: approved). All research activities were conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, with verbal informed consent obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

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Dr. Nadera Hourani (ORCID: 0009-0007-4367-3554) is an Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at King Abdulaziz University. Her recent research examines how artificial intelligence enhances the strategic value of human resources, focusing on areas such as recruitment, retention, and ethical implementation. She employs empirical methods to analyze the impact of AI on HR performance and organizational effectiveness.