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Human Resource Management Practices and Organizational Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review of Effects on Employee Outcomes and Organizational Performance

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ABSTRACT

Background: Evidence concerning human resource management (HRM) practices and organizational behavior (OB) interventions varies across organizational settings, cultures, and research designs.
Aims: This systematic literature review examined employee attitudes (RQ1), mechanisms linking OB interventions to employee outcomes (RQ2), HRM bundles and organizational performance (RQ3), and contextual moderators (RQ4).
Methods: Following PRISMA 2020, searches identified 308 records. After removing 4 duplicates and 45 pre-screening exclusions, 259 records were screened and 152 assessed for eligibility (41 using full texts and 111 using abstracts only). A total of 87 studies entered narrative synthesis and MMAT 2018 appraisal; quantitative pooling was not feasible.
Results: Training, autonomy, feedback, rewards, and high-involvement systems were generally associated with favorable employee outcomes, although some HRM practices showed null or inconsistent associations. Leadership findings primarily concerned motivational and relational pathways. Complementary HRM bundles showed context-dependent and sometimes nonlinear associations with organizational performance.
Conclusion: Associations between HRM, OB, and outcomes are context-dependent rather than universal. Predominantly observational designs, self-reported outcomes, and extensive reliance on abstract-only assessments constrain the strength of inference.

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource management (HRM) is increasingly assessed through its relationship with employee and organizational outcomes rather than solely through the formal adoption of personnel policies. Yet the same practice can yield favorable attitudes in one organization and weak or inconsistent associations in another. Research on high-performance work systems (HPWS) links coordinated HRM practices to engagement, commitment, and satisfaction, while studies of leadership and organizational behavior (OB) emphasize interpersonal processes that shape how employees experience these practices (Afonso et al., 2021; Baillien et al., 2022; Hasinat et al., 2026). This difference between policy design and employees' experience complicates general claims that a particular HRM practice will be effective in every setting. A synthesis therefore needs to examine outcomes, mechanisms, and the conditions under which the reported associations arise.

The empirical literature spans organizations facing markedly different constraints, including hospitals, public agencies, educational institutions, banks, and private firms. Such variation matters because organizational authority, resource availability, regulatory requirements, and workforce composition may shape the opportunities to introduce and sustain HRM practices (Gile et al., 2022; Gregoriou et al., 2023; Luthufi et al., 2021; Mete et al., 2022). For example, leadership behavior and employees' perceptions of workplace justice are relevant to retention and satisfaction in health services, whereas HRM bundles are often examined in relation to productivity or innovative performance (Cantarelli et al., 2023; Gorji et al., 2023; Mustafa et al., 2023). These outcomes operate at different levels and cannot be treated as interchangeable indicators of organizational success. Their coexistence

motivates a review that distinguishes employee attitudes, behavioral pathways, and firm-level performance.

A recurring explanation for favorable employee outcomes is the combination of resources and relational support rather than a single isolated practice. High-involvement systems may simultaneously address skill development, work autonomy, feedback, and participation; supportive leadership may influence whether these resources are perceived as credible and usable (Amoozegar et al., 2025; Cao et al., 2020; Raji et al., 2026). Organizational justice and perceived support are also linked to employee retention and engagement, suggesting that employees evaluate both the content and the implementation of management decisions (Baillien et al., 2022; Mengstie, 2020; Rajak et al., 2024). However, the existence of plausible mechanisms does not demonstrate that those mechanisms are causal, especially when the evidence comes from one-time employee surveys. The design of the available studies must therefore inform how strongly such explanations are expressed.

Evidence is not uniformly positive, which presents a second reason for reviewing the field systematically. Associations involving compensation, ability-enhancing practices, and some leadership dimensions have been weak or statistically non-significant in particular samples (Hassan, 2022; Johar et al., 2022; Memon et al., 2020; Teoh et al., 2022). Other reports suggest that demanding HRM arrangements or unfavorable supervisory conditions can limit potential benefits (Jatoi & Channar, 2026; Salin et al., 2022; Shankar & Sarkar, 2026). These findings need not contradict favorable evidence if the measures, organizational contexts, and implementation conditions differ. They instead raise a more specific question about the boundaries within which a practice or bundle is associated with an outcome.

One stream of research has concentrated on HRM systems and employee attitudes, including studies of engagement, satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention (Afonso et al., 2021; Amoozegar et al., 2025; Hasinat et al., 2026; Raji et al., 2026). A second stream examines leadership, psychological resources, and relationships at work, identifying trust, organizational identification, support, and psychological safety as potential explanatory pathways (Giessner et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2021; Nubuor et al., 2026; Quek et al., 2021; Yuwono et al., 2023). Studies of work design, teleworking, and employee wellbeing add further outcomes and contexts (Figueira et al., 2023; Kossek et al., 2026; Stynen & Semeijn, 2023). Together, these contributions broaden understanding of HRM and OB, but their disciplinary and outcome diversity complicates comparison. A thematic organization can show where the findings overlap without implying that all studies estimate the same effect.

Research on organizational performance introduces a related but distinct problem: a coordinated set of HRM practices may have a different association with performance than any individual practice. Analyses of complementarity suggest possible threshold or configuration effects, although the extent of direct comparison between competing bundles differs across studies (Ali et al., 2026; Mustafa et al., 2023). Contextual research also reports potential differences by industry, ownership, country, company size, and management climate (Bernik & Ferjan, 2026; Cho et al., 2026; Gile et al., 2026; Vo et al., 2022; Wang, 2025). Descriptive comparisons across settings must nevertheless be distinguished from studies that statistically test moderation. A systematic review can contribute by making this distinction explicit and by interpreting findings in light of the reported methodological limitations.

This review synthesizes the available empirical evidence on HRM practices and OB interventions across employee and organizational outcomes. Specifically, it asks which HRM practices are associated with employee attitudes (RQ1), which OB interventions and reported mechanisms relate to performance and wellbeing (RQ2), how HRM bundles relate to organizational performance (RQ3), and which contextual factors appear to condition these relationships (RQ4). The review follows PRISMA 2020 reporting principles and draws on a narrative synthesis of 87 studies with MMAT 2018 methodological appraisal (Page et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2018). Its intended contribution is to compare convergent and divergent findings while distinguishing the interpretation of observed associations from claims of intervention effectiveness. This focus may inform research design and organizational decision-making without implying causal certainty beyond the underlying evidence.

METHOD

Research design and eligibility

The study used a systematic literature review design and followed the PRISMA 2020 reporting guideline (Page et al., 2021). Its protocol specified research questions, eligibility criteria, search strategy, and an appraisal instrument before the search, but it was not registered publicly. The questions were organized through PICO: populations comprised employees, teams, and organizations in private, public, and nonprofit settings; interventions or exposures included HRM practices and OB interventions; comparators included alternative practices, usual practice, or different configurations; and outcomes covered employee attitudes, behavior, wellbeing, retention, and organizational performance. This framework defined the scope of the review rather than implying that every included study contained an intervention and control group.

Eligible reports were empirical studies addressing HRM or OB practices and relevant employee or organizational outcomes, published in English and providing extractable findings. The original protocol covered January 2000 to December 2023, but the working eligibility window was later changed to January 2020 through October 2026 to emphasize contemporary evidence; the change was not prospectively registered. The protocol wording allowed peer-reviewed articles or academic books, whereas the implemented retrieval filter restricted document types to journal articles. Records without an empirical focus, relevant exposure, or relevant outcomes were excluded, as were non-English reports and studies assessed as having severe methodological flaws. The reported inclusion and exclusion criteria were tracked through criterion codes IC1–IC6 and EC1–EC6.

Information sources, search and selection

Records were retrieved from OpenAlex, Semantic Scholar, PubMed, Europe PMC, and arXiv. The search combined synonyms for HRM and HPWS with terms for organizational behavior and employee or organizational outcomes, using Boolean AND across concept groups and OR within groups. Terms included "human resource management", "high-performance work systems", "organizational behavior", "leadership", "employee engagement", "job satisfaction", "organizational commitment", and "organizational performance". The implemented limits were publication years 2020–2026, availability of an abstract, and journal-article document type; the retrieval was capped at the 100 highest-ranked records from each source. CORE was inaccessible and therefore contributed no retrieved records. The manuscript does not report the exact date of the final search or source-specific adaptations to the search string.

Duplicates were identified manually using DOI and title similarity. Review or meta-analysis publications and ineligible document types were removed before title-and-abstract screening, after which the remaining records were screened manually against the stated criteria. Eligibility was evaluated using the full text where available and otherwise using abstracts, with the latter constituting a more limited basis for decision-making. The screening, data extraction, and appraisal were undertaken manually by one author; independent duplicate screening was not reported. Counts at each selection stage are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1, without inferring the number of abstract-only records finally included.

Data extraction, quality appraisal and synthesis

A structured extraction form was used to record study setting, country, participants, sample, research design, instruments, principal results, limitations, and evidence relevant to the four review questions. Data were drawn from full texts when obtainable and from abstracts where full texts were unavailable. Methodological appraisal used the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) 2018, including its two screening questions and five design-specific criteria, which were recorded as "yes", "no", or "can't tell" (Hong et al., 2018). Because MMAT criterion meanings differ by research design, the review did not calculate a single overall quality score. The constrained availability of detailed methods, especially for abstract-only assessments, was considered when interpreting the resulting appraisal ratings.

Findings were coded, grouped into recurrent themes, and aligned with each review question using narrative thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Meta-analysis had been planned for job satisfaction measured as standardized mean differences, organizational commitment expressed as correlations, and organizational performance expressed as correlations. Available summary statistics were manually inspected, but no outcome yielded at least two sufficiently comparable and documented effect-size datasets for pooling, so no quantitative synthesis was conducted. For the descriptive bibliometric analysis, publication metadata, authors, citations, and keywords were collected, and a co-occurrence network was constructed from keywords recorded at least twice using Louvain clustering and a force-directed layout. The synthesis is interpreted primarily as a structured comparison of reported associations, not as a causal estimate of intervention effects.

Results

Study selection

The search produced 308 records: 100 each from OpenAlex, PubMed, and Europe PMC, and four each from Semantic Scholar and arXiv. Before screening, four duplicate records, 43 reviews or meta-analyses, and two ineligible document types were removed. Of 259 title-and-abstract records screened, 107 were excluded, leaving 152 for detailed assessment; only 41 full texts were accessible, and the remaining 111 records were assessed using abstracts. Sixty-five records were subsequently excluded and 87 studies entered the synthesis. The summary data do not distinguish the final number of full-text studies from the final number of abstract-only studies. Table 1 presents the reported stage counts and reasons for exclusion.

Table 1. Study selection summary using PRISMA 2020 stages, identifying abstract-only assessment

PRISMA phase	Records / reports	Exclusions / outcomes
Identification	308 identified: OpenAlex 100/212,732 hits; Semantic Scholar 4/4; PubMed 100/284; Europe PMC 100/4,658; arXiv 4/4; CORE 0 (inaccessible).	Removed before screening: 4 duplicates; 43 reviews/meta-analyses; 2 ineligible document types.
Screening	259 records screened (title and abstract).	107 excluded: EC4 44; IC5 25; IC2 14; EC2 12; EC5 8; IC4 2; IC3 1; EC1 1.
Retrieval	152 records sought for further assessment.	41 full texts obtained; 111 full texts unavailable, with abstracts retained for limited assessment.
Eligibility (full text/abstract)	152 records assessed: 41 using full texts and 111 using abstracts only.	65 excluded: IC5 48; IC2 6; EC4 5; IC3 3; IC4 2; EC2 1. Counts are not disaggregated by source type.
Included	87 studies included in the review.	—

Table 1 shows that the arithmetic across identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion is internally consistent. The first removal stage accounted for 49 records, leaving 259 records for title-and-abstract screening. Further screening excluded 107 records and produced 152 eligibility assessments. Of those assessments, 111 relied on abstracts because their full texts were unavailable. Because eligibility outcomes were not separated by assessment route, the final composition of the 87 included studies cannot be determined precisely from the table. The corresponding selection pathway is depicted in Figure 1, which retains the reported counts without allocating exclusions to an unreported full-text or abstract-only category.

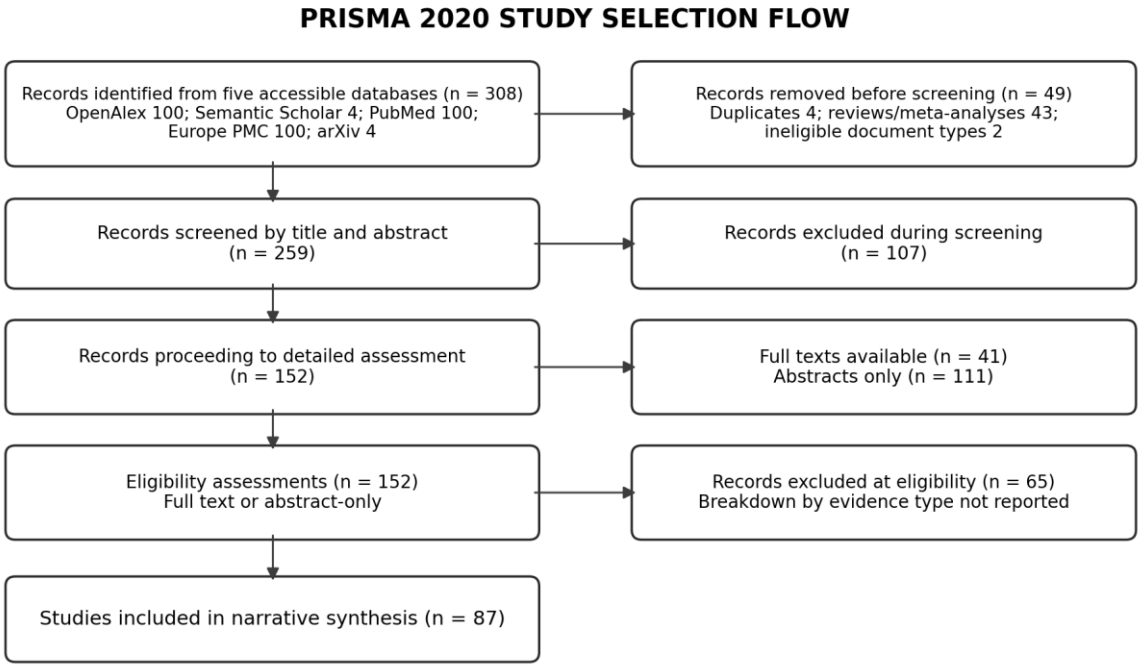


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the documented study-selection process

Figure 1 traces the transition from 308 identified records to 87 studies included in the narrative synthesis. It distinguishes removals made before screening from exclusions made during screening and eligibility assessment. The diagram records the 41 accessible full texts and the 111 assessments that relied on abstracts. It deliberately does not assign the 65 final exclusions to either assessment route because that information was not documented. Accordingly, the figure supports the reported overall flow but does not eliminate uncertainty about the strength of evidence available for the included studies.

Study characteristics and bibliometrics

The 87 included studies were published between 2020 and 2026, with 27 reported in 2026 and 17 in 2020. The evidence base was dominated by nonrandomized quantitative designs (51) and quantitative descriptive studies (22), compared with six qualitative studies, six mixed-methods studies, and two randomized trials. Research settings included health services, education, hospitality, banking, manufacturing, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private workplaces. Reported country concentrations included China (7), Pakistan (5), Indonesia (5), Ethiopia (5), and South Korea (4), alongside smaller country groups and multinational datasets (Gemeda & Lee, 2020; Kizuki & Fujiwara, 2020; Vo et al., 2022). These characteristics establish the context in which the thematic results should be interpreted. Table 2 sets out the reported publication-year and research-design counts.

Table 2. Included studies by publication year and research design (n = 87)

Year	n	Study design	n
2020	17	Non-randomised quantitative	51
2021	10	Quantitative descriptive	22
2022	12	Qualitative	6
2023	14	Mixed methods	6
2024	3	Randomised controlled trial	2
2025	4		
2026	27		

Table 2 shows that the largest publication-year group was 2026, comprising 27 of the 87 studies. Studies from 2020 formed the second-largest group, while the reported contribution from 2024 was comparatively small. Nonrandomized quantitative studies constituted the largest design category, followed by descriptive quantitative research. Only two included studies were classified as randomized

controlled trials. This distribution limits the extent to which reported relationships across the review can be interpreted as causal intervention effects.

Healthcare and public-sector studies were prominent, although the corpus also covered private enterprises and other sectors (Cantarelli et al., 2023; Gile et al., 2022; Luthufi et al., 2021; Mete et al., 2022; Raji et al., 2026). Reported participants ranged from frontline workers and nurses to managers and academic staff, while some studies analyzed firm- or organization-level data (Ali et al., 2026; Cao et al., 2020; Giessner et al., 2023). Several included reports addressed teleworking and changing work arrangements (Bajaba et al., 2021; Figueira et al., 2023; Gregoriou et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021). Others examined broader HRM and organizational outcomes (Asmini et al., 2023; Faizan et al., 2025; Pawirosumarto et al., 2021; Prasad & De, 2024; Pratidhina & Utami, 2023; Zahrani, 2024). Given this diversity, effect estimates and explanatory constructs were not presumed interchangeable.

Keyword metadata were available for all 87 included studies. The most frequent terms were job satisfaction (30), employee performance (19), employee engagement (18), human resource management practice (18), human resource management (17), and turnover intention (16). The network constructed from keywords occurring at least twice formed four reported communities: leadership and engagement; HRM practice and turnover; satisfaction and performance; and HPWS and public healthcare. Publication outlets included Frontiers in Psychology (21), PLoS One (5), and Heliyon (3), with the remainder distributed among other outlets. Figure 2 presents the original keyword network retained from the source manuscript.

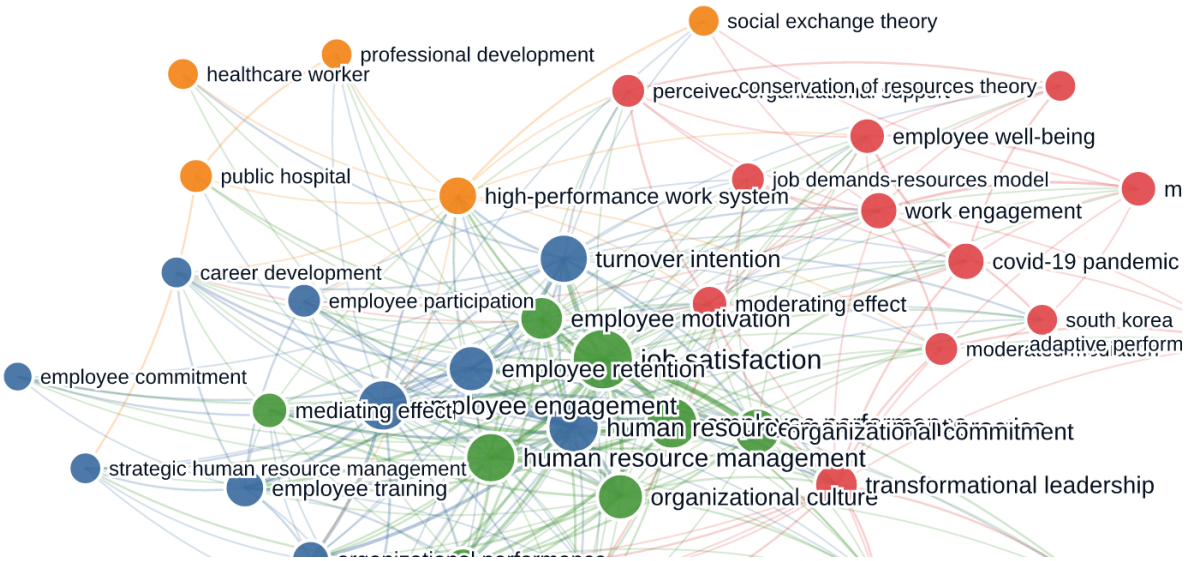


Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence network for the included studies (original network retained)

Figure 2 depicts four thematic groups in the keyword co-occurrence analysis of the 87 included studies. The groups reflect recurring attention to leadership, engagement, HRM practices, satisfaction, and employee performance. One group connects high-performance work systems with public hospitals and healthcare workers, consistent with the representation of healthcare settings in the corpus. The visual arrangement describes shared keyword usage rather than the direction, magnitude, or statistical significance of relationships among research variables. Consequently, the network provides a descriptive map of topics and should not be treated as evidence of causal mechanisms.

Methodological quality

The MMAT 2018 appraisal covered all 87 included studies. Across the five design-specific criteria, the record contained 142 "yes", nine "no", and 284 "can't tell" ratings. The 284 indeterminate entries represented about 65.3% of the 435 criterion-level ratings, indicating that substantial methodological details could not be evaluated on the information available. The two randomized trials identified in the

source manuscript, Kossek et al. (2026) and Zheng et al. (2020), were assessed from abstracts only, which constrains appraisal of their methods. The recorded responses are summarized in Table 3, retaining design-specific criterion positions without treating them as comparable domains across study types.

Table 3. MMAT 2018 responses by design-specific criterion position (n = 87)

MMAT position	Yes	No	Can't tell
S1	87	0	0
S2	86	0	1
C1	43	1	43
C2	49	4	34
C3	16	0	71
C4	8	4	75
C5	26	0	61

Table 3 indicates that the first screening question was answered "yes" for all 87 studies, whereas one response to the second screening question was indeterminate. Among the five appraisal criteria, C4 had the fewest "yes" ratings and the most "can't tell" ratings. C3 and C5 likewise had many indeterminate responses, reflecting limited assessable information rather than established methodological failure. The criterion positions cannot be used to identify a common weakness across different study designs because the MMAT questions differ by category. The appraisal therefore justifies caution about methodological certainty but does not support a single numerical ranking of the included studies.

Thematic synthesis

Coding identified eight recurring themes across the included evidence: HRM bundles and employee attitudes; leadership and engagement; justice, trust, and social exchange; complementarity of HRM practices; contextual moderation; implementation climate; wellbeing and relational resources; and weak or contingent attitudinal effects. The counts in Table 4 reproduce the reported number of studies supporting each theme. They are not presented as a mutually exclusive distribution of the 87 included studies, because the source manuscript does not provide a study-by-theme mapping. Table 4 outlines the thematic descriptions before the results are discussed by research question.

Table 4. Themes emerging from the narrative synthesis and reported supporting-study counts

Theme	Description	n
HPWS bundles and employee attitudes	High-performance work systems and related bundles were frequently associated with motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and engagement, with results varying by implementation and perceptions.	8
Leadership behaviour as engagement lever	Transformational, authentic, inclusive, servant, paradoxical, and distributed leadership were examined in relation to employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance through reported motivational and relational pathways.	17
Justice trust and social exchange	Organizational justice, leader trust, perceived support, and psychological contract fulfillment were described as relational correlates or proposed mechanisms for commitment and retention.	12
Complementarity and configurational effects	Some complementary HRM bundles showed stronger productivity or performance associations than isolated practices, with reported nonlinear and intensity-dependent patterns.	6
Contextual moderation by sector and culture	Sector, ownership, national culture, regulation, and employee characteristics were described as potential contextual conditions; formal moderation tests differed across studies.	9
Implementation climate and leadership interaction	The associations between HR practices and employee responses varied with supervisory approach, bullying conditions, and managerial competence.	6
Wellbeing interventions and relational resources	Mindfulness, supportive supervision, and employee-centered practices were examined in relation to wellbeing and performance, with proposed pathways through sleep, social capital, and role modeling.	5
Weak or contingent attitudinal effects	Some HRM measures had null or nonsignificant associations with satisfaction, commitment, or performance, limiting universal claims.	6

Table 4 shows that leadership as a lever for engagement had the largest reported theme count (17). Justice, trust, and social exchange followed with 12 supporting studies, indicating the prominence of relational interpretations. Six studies were assigned to the complementarity theme and another six to weak or contingent attitudinal effects in the reported summary. The presence of both favorable and null-association themes makes a universally positive interpretation of HRM practices difficult to sustain. Because the theme counts are not linked to an auditable study-level coding table, they should be understood as the manuscript's reported synthesis categories rather than exhaustive numerical estimates of the evidence distribution.

RQ1. HRM practices and employee attitudes

Across the included studies, high-performance and high-involvement systems were repeatedly associated with engagement, commitment, satisfaction, and motivation. Studies addressing coordinated HRM practices included Afonso et al. (2021), Tensay and Singh (2020), Amoozegar et al. (2025), Baillien et al. (2022), Cao et al. (2020), and Raji et al. (2026). Within these arrangements, training, autonomy, performance feedback, and employee involvement were commonly reported alongside favorable attitudes (Gilitwal & Kumar, 2020; Memon et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2026). However, evidence about compensation and selective staffing was not consistently favorable, and some ability-enhancing measures showed non-significant associations (Johar et al., 2022; Mazhar et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2020). Other context-specific findings were null or mixed (Bhargava et al., 2026; Hassan, 2022; Linggiallo et al., 2020; Shankar & Sarkar, 2026). Taken together, the studies suggest recurrent positive associations with coordinated practices, not a pooled or universally causal effect.

RQ2. Organizational behavior interventions

Leadership was the most extensively represented OB intervention or practice. Transformational, inclusive, authentic, servant, distributed, supportive, and paradoxical leadership were variously associated with engagement, satisfaction, wellbeing, retention, or performance (Giessner et al., 2023; İnce et al., 2026; Jalloh et al., 2026; Jin et al., 2021; Quek et al., 2021; Stynen & Semeijn, 2023; Wen & Cai, 2025; Yuwono et al., 2023). Reported explanatory pathways included intrinsic motivation, organizational identification, trust, psychological safety, leader-member exchange, and work meaningfulness (Gemeda & Lee, 2020; Liang, 2026; Nubuor et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2021). Mindfulness and leave-supportive supervisor training were discussed in connection with sleep, role modeling, and work outcomes (Kossek et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2020). However, some leadership dimensions were weak or nonsignificant, and abusive or laissez-faire supervision was associated with unfavorable conditions (Akbar, 2023; Jeong et al., 2026; Salin et al., 2022; Teoh et al., 2022). The combination of observational designs and limited trial detail means that these pathways remain more securely described as reported mechanisms or associations than as established causal processes.

RQ3. HRM bundles and organizational performance

The organizational-performance findings favored examining complementary HRM systems rather than isolated management practices, but they offered limited grounds for ranking specific configurations. Ali et al. (2026) reported nonlinear patterns and intensity thresholds in hospital data, with bundles involving job design, team quality, and incentives associated with performance differences. Tensay and Singh (2020) reported stronger relationships for combined HRM arrangements than for individual practices, while Jadhavar et al. (2026) related HRM practices and employee engagement to organizational performance. Mustafa et al. (2023) reported green HRM pathways involving knowledge sharing and innovation, and Acosta-Prado et al. (2020) examined organizational culture in innovative performance. Counterexamples included weak or nonsignificant financial relationships in SMEs and other contexts (Bernik & Ferjan, 2026; Bhargava et al., 2026). Different definitions of productivity, financial performance, innovation, and service outcomes limit the interpretation of these studies as a single quantitative performance result.

RQ4. Contextual moderators

The included studies described contextual variation by sector, ownership, national culture, company size, regulation, and implementation conditions. Comparisons of public and private hospitals and banking contexts suggested differing HRM constraints, justice perceptions, and organizational conditions (Gile et al., 2022; Gile et al., 2026; Jadhavar et al., 2026; Mengstie, 2020). Cross-cultural studies reported both common leadership-engagement relationships and context-sensitive employee attitudes (Cho et al., 2026; Gemeda & Lee, 2020; Vo et al., 2022). Workplace bullying, laissez-faire supervision, perceived organizational support, and organizational climate were also identified as potential boundary conditions (Baillien et al., 2022; Jin et al., 2021; Rajak et al., 2024; Salin et al., 2022; Wang, 2025). Individual conditions such as person-organization matching and attitudes toward artificial intelligence further extended the scope of contextual variation (Gemmano et al., 2026; Liang, 2026). Because many reports compared separate settings without formal interaction estimates, not every observed difference can be described as statistically established moderation.

Feasibility of quantitative synthesis

The planned outcomes for possible quantitative pooling were job satisfaction (standardized mean difference), organizational commitment (correlation), and organizational performance (correlation). In the reported feasibility assessment, no outcome contained at least two sufficiently comparable and documented effect-size datasets, leaving $k = 0$ for each planned pooled analysis. Consequently, pooled estimates, confidence intervals, heterogeneity statistics, and prediction intervals were not produced. This decision concerns the adequacy of extractable data for statistical synthesis and does not imply that no included studies examined these outcomes. The results are therefore interpreted through narrative comparisons of study-specific findings.

Discussion

The central finding is not that HRM practices produce uniform employee benefits, but that favorable associations repeatedly occur alongside evidence of context-dependent and null results. Studies of HPWS and employee engagement point toward the potential advantage of coordinating training, feedback, autonomy, and participation, yet they do not identify an invariant practice that succeeds across all settings (Afonso et al., 2021; Amoozegar et al., 2025; Raji et al., 2026). This interpretation is compatible with the conflicting results reported for compensation and ability-enhancing practices, where outcomes appear sensitive to what employees perceive and to how practices are implemented (Hassan, 2022; Johar et al., 2022; Shankar & Sarkar, 2026). The evidence thus favors a conditional account over both universal endorsement and categorical rejection of HRM systems. For theory, the relevant unit of explanation may be the experienced configuration of practices rather than the nominal presence of individual policies.

The leadership findings complement this explanation because OB practices describe processes through which formal management arrangements are enacted in everyday relationships. Studies addressing supportive, inclusive, authentic, and transformational leadership associate these styles with engagement or performance through motivation, identification, trust, and psychological resources (Giessner et al., 2023; Jalloh et al., 2026; Jin et al., 2021; Quek et al., 2021). These links are consistent with the relational accounts advanced in the reviewed literature, but cross-sectional self-reports cannot establish temporal ordering between leadership perceptions and employee outcomes. The partially significant leadership dimensions in Teoh et al. (2022) also caution against treating broad leadership categories as internally uniform. In practice, leadership development merits consideration as part of HRM implementation, with subsequent evaluation using designs capable of separating perceived support from actual change in outcomes.

Justice, trust, perceived organizational support, and psychological safety recur across the review because they offer a plausible bridge between organizational practices and employees' reactions. Bullying was reported to weaken an otherwise favorable HPWS-engagement relationship, while unfavorable supervisory approaches were associated with poorer interpersonal conditions (Baillien et al., 2022; Salin

et al., 2022). Research on psychological resources and organizational justice likewise connected employee perceptions with wellbeing, commitment, or turnover intention (Gorji et al., 2023; Nubuor et al., 2026; Shao et al., 2022). These studies provide conceptual coherence across otherwise diverse interventions, but the pathways were operationalized differently and were not consistently evaluated together. Future research can test whether these relational constructs remain distinguishable mediators when assessed concurrently and over time.

The organizational-performance evidence suggests that complementarity warrants more attention than the isolated effects of individual HRM activities. The reported threshold patterns in Ali et al. (2026) are compatible with the idea that the productivity association of one practice may depend on the presence and intensity of others. Related evidence on engagement and green HRM systems offers convergent but not identical outcomes, including employee performance, innovation, and competitive advantage (Jadhavar et al., 2026; Mustafa et al., 2023; Tensay & Singh, 2020). Because few studies directly compared alternative configurations using commensurable organizational measures, the present synthesis cannot identify a universally optimal HRM bundle. The practical inference is to evaluate proposed bundles against a defined outcome and organizational constraint rather than assuming that a larger number of practices will always improve performance.

Contextual differences provide a substantive explanation for why results vary even when the reported HRM labels are similar. Studies in public and private hospitals identify differences in HRM capacity and institutional conditions, while research on SMEs and banking systems indicates that ownership and sector may alter implementation opportunities (Bernik & Ferjan, 2026; Gile et al., 2022; Gile et al., 2026; Jadhavar et al., 2026). Cross-national findings also show that some leadership-engagement patterns recur across settings, whereas other employee-outcome relationships differ with cultural characteristics (Cho et al., 2026; Gemeda & Lee, 2020; Vo et al., 2022). This mixture argues against describing national culture as an all-purpose explanation for every contrasting result. Moreover, only studies that estimated interaction effects can substantiate formal moderation claims; descriptive differences remain hypotheses about possible boundary conditions.

Employee wellbeing requires a separate interpretive caution because the intervention studies are few and differ substantially in design. Mindfulness-based and supervisor-support interventions suggest potentially relevant pathways through sleep, role modeling, health, and workplace support (Kersemaekers et al., 2020; Kossek et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2020). However, the two randomized trials included in the source corpus were appraised from abstracts rather than complete reports, leaving trial conduct and methodological limitations difficult to assess. Evidence from these interventions is therefore not directly comparable with the much larger collection of nonrandomized self-report studies. A stronger research program would combine documented intervention protocols with adequate follow-up and clearly specified employee outcome measures.

The unusually large share of indeterminate MMAT ratings affects the weight that can be placed on apparently repeated findings. Of 435 design-specific criterion judgments, 284 could not be determined from the available information, and the review does not report separate quality profiles for full-text and abstract-only studies. The lack of sufficient comparable effect-size data also prevented the planned meta-analyses for satisfaction, commitment, and organizational performance. These constraints mean that convergence in a narrative synthesis should be described as recurrent reporting rather than as a precise estimate of effect magnitude or certainty. Interpreting findings by design category and completeness of reporting would be a necessary next step toward stronger confidence assessments.

The review has implications for both management practice and future research, but the implications should remain proportionate to its evidence base. Organizations may consider coherent HRM arrangements that align employee resources with credible managerial support, while monitoring both desired outcomes and possible unintended demands (Amoozegar et al., 2025; Jatoi & Channar, 2026; Shankar & Sarkar, 2026). Researchers should prioritize prospective designs, objective or multilevel organizational outcomes, explicit comparisons of HRM bundles, and direct tests of contextual interactions

(Ali et al., 2026; Giessner et al., 2023; Wang, 2025). Entrepreneurial firms and supply-chain-intensive settings remain promising applications for direct empirical study rather than immediate extrapolation from the broader sample of sectors. The review's principal conceptual contribution is the organization of reported HRM and OB associations around mechanisms, practice complementarity, and evidence-sensitive contextual boundaries.

Limitations and future research

The evidence base was dominated by nonrandomized and descriptive quantitative research, with only two randomized trials and six mixed-methods studies. Predominant reliance on cross-sectional, employee-reported measures limits causal inference and raises concerns about common-method variance. Operational definitions of HPWS, engagement, justice, and organizational performance varied, including differences between employee-level judgments and objective or firm-level indicators. Contextual coverage was also uneven, with substantial representation of Asian and African settings and health-sector populations (Gile et al., 2022; Luthufi et al., 2021; Mengstie, 2020). As a result, patterns should not be transferred automatically across countries, industries, or organizational sizes.

The review procedure imposed additional constraints: a cap of 100 retrieved records from each source, one inaccessible database, a post hoc change in the publication window, manual screening by a single author, and 111 eligibility assessments based on abstracts alone. The summary did not identify how many of the 87 included studies ultimately came from each assessment route. Substantial MMAT indeterminacy, absence of a reported study-level evidence matrix, and lack of formal certainty or reporting-bias assessment further limit independent appraisal. Future reviews should document final search dates and reproducible database-specific strings, seek full texts systematically, report inclusion routes separately, and use independent duplicate appraisal where feasible. More primary studies using longitudinal, experimental, configurational, and multilevel methods would also improve the comparability and interpretation of HRM and OB findings.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review identified recurrent favorable associations between coordinated HRM practices and employee attitudes, particularly when training, autonomy, feedback, and involvement were considered as parts of broader practice systems. Leadership findings emphasized motivational and relational pathways, including trust, support, identification, and psychological safety. At the organizational level, complementary HRM configurations appeared promising, but relationships varied by implementation and context, and some studies reported weak or non-significant results. These conclusions are based on the narrative synthesis of 87 studies rather than pooled effect estimates and should not be interpreted as uniform causal effects.

Organizations may use the findings to guide context-sensitive evaluation of HRM bundles and leadership practices, rather than applying supposedly universal prescriptions. Research priorities include better-documented intervention studies, direct comparisons of HRM configurations, harmonized outcome metrics, and formal testing of cultural, industry, ownership, and firm-size moderators. Because much of the source evidence was observational and many records were evaluated from abstracts, conclusions about magnitude and certainty remain limited. The most defensible contribution of the review is the identification of convergent mechanisms, divergent results, and methodological conditions that future empirical research should address.

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