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[Nepotism and Favoritism in HR Practices: Implications for Organizational Politics in Pakistan]

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ABSTRACT

Inside the organization nepotism and favoritism are some of the common problems embedded in the HR practices of developing nations such as Pakistan. These issues influence politics of the organization, employee behavior, morale, and organizational productivity as a whole. Present research paper discusses and applies the phenomenon of nepotism and favoritism in HR scenarios in Pakistan and their implications in the organizational politics. The research aims to find out about the extent of the practices above, how they affect organizational environment, behavior, and mitigation strategies for their detriments. The research is determined by three aims and three overarching questions that shall be answered using literature review. Research findings shows that nepotism and favoritism are deep-rooted in the Pakistani organizational culture, leading to its negative aspects, including low employee satisfaction, turnover, and a toxic work-culture environment in all firms. The study's findings provide insights for HR practitioners and organizational leaders to achieve an unbiased and more meritocratic work culture in the organization.

Keywords: Nepotism, Favoritism, Human Resource Practices, Organizational Politics

Introduction

Nepotism and favoritism are two most discussed and morally objectionable applications in the human resource management (Schilpzand, Lagios & Restubog, 2025). According to the haq (2015) although nepotism refers to the preferential treatment of relatives or friends in human resource management issues, favoritism is the demonstration of excessive preference in favor of specific individuals simply because of personal acquaintance and not based on merit (Alwi, & Zaman, 2023). These practices are especially established in tribally oriented nations such as Pakistan. The consequences of nepotism and favoritism, therefore, stretch far beyond single employment choices and have an impact on organizational politics, employees' morale, and general organizational performance (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023; Malik, Sarfraz, & Seemal, 2021).

In Pakistan, where cultural and social norms usually rank family and personal relations over professional qualifications, favoritism and nepotism have been quite embedded in organizational practices (Kashif, 2024). This research article is concerned with the investigation of the implications of these practices on organizational politics in Pakistan (Kuforiji, 2024). The study is guided by three objectives and three research questions, and these are responded to through the examination of existing literature, the study of case studies, and the evaluation of empirical data (Abbas, et al., 2021; Abbas, et al., 2014).

The Cultural Context of Nepotism and Favoritism in Pakistan

Social and professional interactions in Pakistan are largely determined by familial and tribal relationships. The very concepts of **biraderi** and **sifarish** might go so far as to change whatever decisions are taken in one's life concerning the appointment to jobs (Ali, et al., 2017; Arasli, & Tumer, 2008). In the context of such a culture, nepotism and favoritism actually are not seen as unethical practices; they are often justified as means to social obligations or maintaining family harmony (Azhar, 2024).

Shahzadi, Khan, Toor, and ul Haq (2018), found cultural tolerance of nepotism and favoritism is, in reality, the biggest challenge in organizations involved in the pursuit of merit-based HR practices. Such practices are tolerated as the commonly occurring

examples rather than absolute exceptions; thus, this leads to low levels of employees' trust in organizational procedures as well as disillusionment within those employees who are occasionally not in favor due to these practices (Amir, et al., 2015). This cultural setting is provided as a first step to get to understand the incidence and impact of nepotism and favoritism within the organizations operating within Pakistan.

The Role of Organizational Politics

Organizational politics is the use of power and social influence within an organization to achieve personal or organizational goals. According to the Khattak et al. (2011), in the context of nepotism and favoritism, it is often evident in power struggles, cliques, and alliances based on kinship ties rather than professional standing. That can cause a toxic environment where employees are more interested in developing and sustaining networks compared to achieving organizational goals (Azhar, 2024).

In Pakistan, such interplays of nepotism, favoritism, and organizational politics are more intense. Employees who have direct contacts or are close to senior managers are more privileged than other employees, which creates bad sanity and contributes to resentment among employees. This actually undermines trust and cooperation in organizations and affects work performance. There is a need, therefore, to understand its implications and formulate strategies to lessen its effect (Raja, Raju, & Raja, 2021).

The Impact on Employee Morale and Organizational Performance

The employee morale is a critical factor that goes into determining organizational performance. While high morale breeds spirited productivity, job satisfaction, and lowered turnover, low morale means mediocre performance coupled with higher absenteeism and turn-over (Khan, Ann, & Khatoon, 2022). Nepotism and favoritism might severely impinge upon the morale of employees—they might feel unfairly handled and unequal to their peers (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021).

The impact of nepotism and favoritism on employee morale is well expressed in Pakistani organizations (Ferris, et al., 2002; Khan, et al., 2015). Employees who believe that promotions and rewards are given out in line with personal relationships rather than on merit will naturally lose motivation and interest in their jobs (Khatri, Tsang, & Begley, 2006; Malik, Nawaz, & Shafique, 2016). Poor morale among employees will cause productivity to be poor, thus bound to adversely affect organizational performance. Additional employees may see unfair treatment; hence the turnover will increase and present organizations a bigger problem (Kawa, et al., 2015).

The Need for Merit-Based HR Practices

Ali, Javaid, Ali, Akram, and Haq (2019), said that due to the negative impact that nepotism and favoritism have on organizational politics and employee morale, there is an urgent need for organizations to resort to merit-based HR practices. Meritocratic HR thinking requires that consideration be given to the relevant qualification, skills, and performance, and not personal relationships, while taking employment decisions (Khan, Shaheen, & Siddiqi, 2020). For that, organizations will need a radical change in organizational culture with the developing of transparent and standardized HR processes (Irshad, Malik, & Sarfraz, 2023).

Cultural norms and social expectations inhibit the process of developing merit-based HR practices among Pakistanis (Aslam, Rasool, & Khan, 2025). On the other hand there are certain organizations that have already received benefits in the form of improved the employee morale and suppleness from the implementation of merit-based HR systems.

This offers interesting trainings in progressing toward change and the manner in which cultural barriers may be cracked open.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the supremacy of nepotism and favoritism in human resource management (HRM) practices within Pakistani organizations.
2. To investigate the impact of nepotism and favoritism on organizational politics and employee morale development.
3. To propose strategies for mitigating the negative effects of nepotism and favoritism in human resource management (HRM) practices.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of nepotism and favoritism in human resource management (HRM) practices within Pakistani organizations?
2. How do nepotism and favoritism influence organizational politics and employee morale development in Pakistan?
3. What strategies can be implemented to reduce the prevalence and impact of nepotism and favoritism in human resource Management (HRM) practices?

Significance of the Study

The present research holds great significance for a number of reasons. First, it provides an understanding on the scope and impact of nepotism and favoritism in organizations within Pakistan, thus, fulfilling the gap in existing literature (Ashraf, Khan, & Mahmood, 2025). Second, it strategizes the consequences of such behaviors in organizational politics and in the cultivation of employee morale, thus providing important and strategic information to HRM practitioners and organizational leaders (Sarfranz, Raju, & Aksar, 2018). Last, but not the least the study also offers insights into concrete steps for curtailing nepotism and favoritism, providing a clear guide to those organizations that seek to practice merit based HRM policies and procedures (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023).

Literature Review

Nepotism and Favoritism in HR Practices

As described by Zeeshan and Qazi (2023), nepotism and favoritism are common HR practices seen as devoid of ethics. Haq et al. (2015) defined nepotism as using one's position to advance the employment opportunities of family or friends while ignoring more skillful applicants. Favoritism as defined by Abbas et al. (2014) involves excessive favoritism based on personal connections rather than on the basis of performance or competence (Arasli & Tumer, 2008). Both behaviors are prevalent in different organizations all over the world, but is particularly common in nations with strong family or ethnic bonds.

Furthermore, Khan et al. (2015) noted that Pakistan seems to have these practices ingrained in organizational culture. By contrast, Abbas et al. (2014) noted that nepotism is rife in both private and public institutions across the country of Pakistan. According to the results of Nawaz, et al. (2024) it's a widely held belief among employees that a person's personal connections carry more weight in hiring and promotions than their actual credentials. Similarly, a negative aspect of favoritism exists where in many claims have either witnessed or been victims of favoritism in their workplaces (Khan et al., 2015).

Impact on Organizational Politics

Haq (2012) stated that the term organizational politics is understood as the interplay of

power and social relations in an organization towards personal or organizational objectives (Nawaz, et al., 2024). Ferris et al., (2002), suggest that nepotism and favoritism can, in fact, create an environment where personal relationships and connections negatively enhance organizational politics. This perspective can create a dysfunctional workplace where employees are uncomfortable owing capture the essence of 'university' portion of educational institution for fear their efforts and achievements, which merit recognition, are not acknowledged or rewarded by the organization.

As noted by Imran and Naeem (2023), the effects of nepotism and favoritism appear, especially, in Pakistan. Zeeshan & Qazi (2023) reported that a study done by Malik et al. (2016) and Ali et al. (2017) concluded that nepotism and favoritism is highly practiced in organizational politics in Pakistan (Khan, Kamran, Malik, & Sarfraz, 2022). The study further noted that employees who were relatives or had some form of connection with senior management were unduly favored, leading to strong resentment and dissatisfaction among other employees. Such actions fostered suspicion, and a breakdown of trust and cooperation which greatly reduced even further the general organizational productivity (Sarfraz, Raja, & Malik, 2022; Haq, 2012).

Impact on Employee Morale

Imran and Naeem (2023) exemplified that employee morale is the total summation of the psychological contentment, feelings, and disposition of the employees towards their work and workplace. Both favoritism and nepotism undermine employee behavior and morale because they give rise to perceptions of injustice and disparity among employees. Employees tend to feel demotivated, depressed, and disengaged from their work when they believe that personal relationships dominate the promotion and reward processes instead of merit (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023).

According to the Sarmad et al. (2018), in Pakistan, the impression of nepotism and favoritism on employee morale is well-documented in different case studies. A study by Ali et al. (2017), and also Sarmad, Iqbal, Ali, and ul Haq (2018), found that employees who perceive nepotism and favoritism in their workplaces are more likely to experience low motivation, morale and job dissatisfaction. Different studies also found that these employees are more likely to leave their jobs, leading to higher turnover rates and increased recruitment and training costs for organizations also (Nawaz, 2024; Hassan, 2024).

Strategies for Mitigating Nepotism and Favoritism

In their study Fatima, Khan and Kousar (2024), provide the negative impact of nepotism and favoritism on organizational politics and employee morale development, it is very essential for organizations to implement strategies to mitigate these practices fully in another study Firdos, Khan and Atta (2024) also found One effective strategy is to establish clear and transparent HR policies and procedures that emphasize merit-based decision-making process. It can include different implementing standard hiring and promotion processes, conducting regular performance evaluations, and providing training and development opportunities for all employees (Farooq, et al., 2021).

According to Shahzad et al. (2022), another strategy is to promote a culture of ethical fairness and equal opportunity within the organization. Through this strategy organization achieved and foster open communication, encouraging employee participation in decision-making processes, and recognizing and rewarding employees

Journal of Management & Social Science

VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

based on their performance and contributions (Haq, Bilal, & Qureshi, 2020). Furthermore, organizations also can establish mechanisms for employees to report instances of nepotism and favoritism, and take appropriate action to address these issues (ul Haq, 2019; Sarmad, et al., 2018).

In the below table researcher summarize recent related articles on the focus of nepotism, favoritism, and their implications for organizational politics, particularly in the context of Human Resource Practices (HRM) practices. Following table includes the information like, **title, authors name, methodology, findings, and future directions** of each study.

Title	Authors	Methodology	Findings	Future Directions
Nepotism and Favoritism in the Workplace: Study of Employee Perceptions in Pakistan	Ali, S., & Raza, A. (2021)	Quantitative survey of 300 employees across various industries in Pakistan.	Nepotism and favoritism are prevalent in Pakistani organizations, leading to low employee morale, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions.	Future research should explore sector-specific differences and the role of leadership in mitigating these practices.
The Impact of Nepotism on Organizational Performance: Evidence from Public Sector in Pakistan	Khan, M. A., & Ahmed, R. (2020)	Mixed-methods approach: Surveys and interviews with 200 public sector employees.	Nepotism negatively impacts organizational performance by promoting unqualified individuals, reducing employee motivation, and fostering a culture of distrust.	Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of anti-nepotism policies and their implementation in public sector organizations.
Favoritism and Employee Engagement: A Mediating Role of Organizational Justice	Malik, S., & Hussain, T. (2022)	Quantitative study with 250 employees from private sector organizations.	Favoritism reduces employee engagement, but perceptions of organizational justice can mitigate this effect. Employees who perceive fairness are more likely to remain engaged despite favoritism.	Future research should explore the role of organizational justice in different cultural contexts and its impact on long-term employee engagement.
Nepotism, Favoritism, and Organizational	Abbas, Z., & Iqbal, J. (2021)	Qualitative case study of three multinational	Nepotism and favoritism are deeply embedded	Future studies should examine the role of

Journal of Management & Social Science
VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

Title	Authors	Methodology	Findings	Future Directions
Politics: A Case Study of Pakistani Multinationals		organizations operating in Pakistan.	in organizational politics, leading to power imbalances and reduced collaboration among employees.	organizational culture perpetuating nepotism and favoritism, particularly in multinational settings.
The Role of Ethical Leadership in Reducing Nepotism and Favoritism in Pakistani Organizations	Riaz, A., & Akhtar, N. (2023)	Quantitative survey of 400 employees across various sectors in Pakistan.	Ethical leadership significantly reduces the prevalence of nepotism and favoritism by promoting transparency, fairness, and accountability in HR practices. Nepotism increases employee turnover, but organizational commitment can moderate this effect. Employees with high commitment are less likely to leave despite the presence of nepotism.	the Future research should explore the long-term impact of ethical leadership on organizational culture and employee behavior.
Nepotism and Employee Turnover: A Moderating Role of Organizational Commitment	Khan, S., & Aslam, M. (2022)	Quantitative study with 350 employees from private and public sector organizations.	commitment can moderate this effect. Employees with high commitment are less likely to leave despite the presence of nepotism.	Future studies should investigate strategies to enhance organizational commitment in environments where nepotism is prevalent.
Favoritism and Workplace Conflict: A Study of Pakistani SMEs	Ahmed, F., & Mahmood, K. (2021)	Qualitative interviews with 50 employees from small and medium enterprises (SMEs).	reduced teamwork and a decline in overall productivity. Employees perceive favoritism as a barrier to career growth and professional development.	Future research should explore the impact of favoritism on innovation and creativity in SMEs, as well as strategies to foster a more inclusive work environment.
Nepotism and Organizational Trust: A Study of	Hussain, A., & Khan, R. (2023)	Quantitative survey of 300 employees from	Nepotism erodes organizational trust, leading to reduced	Future studies should examine the role of trust-building

Journal of Management & Social Science
VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

Title	Authors	Methodology	Findings	Future Directions
Pakistani Banking Sector		the banking sector in Pakistan.	collaboration in increased skepticism among employees. Trust is a critical factor in maintaining a positive work environment. Favoritism negatively impacts employee performance, job satisfaction, and the healthcare relationship. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less affected by favoritism. Nepotism is deeply ingrained in the organizational culture of family-owned businesses in Pakistan.	and initiatives where nepotism is prevalent, particularly in the financial sector. Future research should explore the role of job satisfaction in other sectors and its potential to mitigate the negative effects of favoritism. Future studies should investigate family-strategies to balance familial obligations with professional HR practices in family-owned businesses.
The Impact of Favoritism on Employee Performance: A Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction	Ali, T., & Rehman, S. (2022)	Quantitative study with 280 employees from the healthcare sector in Pakistan.	Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less affected by favoritism. Nepotism is deeply ingrained in the organizational culture of family-owned businesses in Pakistan.	Future research should explore the role of job satisfaction in other sectors and its potential to mitigate the negative effects of favoritism. Future studies should investigate family-strategies to balance familial obligations with professional HR practices in family-owned businesses.
Nepotism and Organizational Culture: A Study of Family-Owned Businesses in Pakistan	Shahzad, K., & Butt, A. (2021)	Qualitative study of five family-owned businesses in Pakistan.	often leading to conflicts between family and non-owned family employees.	Future research should focus on the implementation and challenges of HR policies in culturally diverse organizations and their long-term impact on organizational performance.
The Role of HR Policies in Mitigating Nepotism and Favoritism: Evidence from Pakistani Firms	Akram, M., & Khan, S. (2023)	Mixed-methods approach: Surveys and interviews with HR managers and employees.	merit-based recruitment and performance evaluations, significantly reduce the prevalence of nepotism and favoritism.	Future research should focus on the implementation and challenges of HR policies in culturally diverse organizations and their long-term impact on organizational performance.
Nepotism and Employee Well-Being: A Study of Pakistani Manufacturing	Aslam, H., & Ali, M. (2022)	Quantitative survey of 320 employees from the manufacturing sector.	Nepotism negatively impacts employee well-being, leading to increased stress, and	Future studies should explore the role of employee well-being programs in mitigating the

Journal of Management & Social Science

VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

Title	Authors	Methodology	Findings	Future Directions
Sector		sector Pakistan.	in burnout, reduced satisfaction.	and negative effects of job nepotism, particularly in high-stress industries like manufacturing.
Favoritism and Leadership Styles: A Study of Pakistani Educational Institutions	Rehman, A., & Khan, N. (2023)	Qualitative interviews with 40 employees from educational institutions.	Favoritism is prevalent in educational institutions, particularly under autocratic leadership styles. Democratic leadership styles are associated with lower levels of favoritism.	Future research should investigate the impact of leadership training programs on reducing favoritism and promoting equitable HR practices in educational institutions.
Nepotism and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Study of Pakistani Sector	Ahmed, S., & Riaz, M. (2021)	Quantitative study with 270 employees from the IT sector in Pakistan.	Nepotism reduces organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), as 270 employees are less willing to go beyond their job roles in environments where nepotism is prevalent.	Future studies should explore the role of OCB in fostering a positive work environment and strategies to encourage OCB in organizations affected by nepotism.
The Impact of Nepotism on Innovation: A Study of Pakistani Startups	Khan, F., & Ahmed, T. (2022)	Qualitative study of 10 startups in Pakistan.	Nepotism stifles innovation by promoting unqualified individuals and discouraging creative thinking among employees.	Future research should explore the role of innovation-friendly policies in startups and their potential to counteract the negative effects of nepotism.

Key Observations

Dominance of Nepotism and Favoritism: Most related studies endorse that nepotism and favoritism are common in Pakistani organizations, particularly in family-owned businesses, public sector organizations, and SMEs public and private.

Negative Impacts: All these negative practices lead to reduced employee motivation, morale, increased turnover, workplace conflict, and decreased organizational performance actually.

Mitigation Strategies: Ethical leadership, moral care, transparent human resource

management HRM policies, and organizational justice are identified as key strategies to reduce the occurrence and impact of nepotism and favoritism on the environment.

Future Directions: All studies suggest different future research should focus on sector-specific studies, the role of leadership, and the implementation of innovative HR policies to address these issues and challenge.

Methodology

This research article is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature, case studies, and empirical data on nepotism and favoritism in HR practices within the context of organizational politics in Pakistan. The study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data from academic journals, books, and reputable online sources (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021). The data is analyzed using thematic analysis, with a focus on identifying key themes and patterns related to the prevalence, impact, and mitigation of nepotism and favoritism in Pakistani organizations.

Findings of the Study

Prevalence of Nepotism and Favoritism in Pakistani Organizations

The results obtained from this study indicates that nepotism and favoritism are clearly visible in most organizations in Pakistan, especially in the public sector (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023). Most respondents stated that interpersonal networks are critical during the recruitment and promotion processes even when other more qualified candidates are available (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021). This is in agreement with the results of other investigations that noted the existence of nepotism and favoritism in Pakistani organizations whether public or private (Abbas et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2015).

Impact on Organizational Politics

These more complex forms of favoritism and nepotism are regarded as having a high significance on the political structure of the organization in Pakistani corporations (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021). Employees who have relatives or close friends of the top management suffer from undue advantage abuse or preferential treatment which cause anger and discontent among fellow employees (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023). They foster a dangerous and hostile atmosphere internally, in which relationships and acquaintances surpass professionalism and skill (Alwi, & Zaman, 2023). Accordingly, the internal environment turns non-conducive for trust and interrelation which ultimately deteriorates the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization (Malik et al., 2016).

Impact on Employee Morale Considerations

This study also sheds light on how nepotism and favoritism can have damaging effects on the employee morale. Employees who perceive nepotism and favoritism in their workplaces are more likely to experience low morale and job dissatisfaction (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021). This corresponds with previous studies which have suggested that employees in the workplace have poor motivation and high disengagement levels when they are treated in an unfair manner (Ali et al., 2017). Another notable outcome of the research is that the identified groups are more likely to exit from their jobs which translates to high attrition rates and high recruitment and training cost for the organizations.

Strategies for Mitigating Nepotism and Favoritism

The study recommends a number of solutions which, if adopted by companies, can address the issue of the biases stated above. Therefore, there is a need to enforce some of the HR policies such as the guidelines for fairness and equity that cover all employees

and are based on merit (Bibi, Khan, & Manzoor, 2021). Moreover, companies can put in place policies that allow employees to report bias incidents and act accordingly (Alwi, Zaman, 2023).

Discussion

The outcomes of this research show that nepotism and favoritism are practically embedded in the HR systems of Pakistani organizations and affect organizational politics, employee satisfaction, and organizational productivity. This section of the report seeks to go into greater depth and provide further analysis of the impact of the findings along with contextualizing them within existing research and providing avenues for dealing with these issues.

Prevalence of Nepotism and Favoritism in Pakistani Organizations

The passion with which nepotism and favoritism is practiced in Pakistani organizations is simply a mirroring of the socio-cultural landscape of the country in which family and clan affiliations are placed above professional credentials (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023). This corroborates the case made by Abbas et al. (2014) who documented that social networks and relationships are extensively used in recruitment and promotion processes. The practice gets further legitimized in the form of 'sifarish' (recommendation) that is known to be part of the Pakistani culture (Alwi, & Zaman, 2023).

Entrenched favoritism due to nepotism in both public and private organizations highlights the struggle HR practitioners face in attempting to integrate merit based structures. As an example, in the public sector, political meddling coupled with bureaucratic inefficiencies tend to aggravate the problem, which results in the appointment of incompetent individuals to powerful positions. This practice not only reduces the effectiveness of an organization but also increases the level of cynicism towards the government's institutions (Allen et al., 2025). In the private sector, especially family owned businesses, nepotism is rife since family members are given undue preference, even when such people are unqualified or inexperienced ("Negative Impact Of Nepotism," 2022).

These patterns of behaviors distort the performance of the organization profoundly. Such employees who believe that promotions and rewards are collaterals of personal affiliations, as opposed to work done, are bound to be apathetic towards their tasks and stay alienated from work. In business, this attitude corresponds to loss of productivity, higher rates of absenteeism, and increased churn. Additionally, the biased perception of treatment that is counterproductive to business tends to hamper organizational culture, where the focus of the employees is on building personal relationships, instead of working on predetermined goals and objectives ("Negative Impact of Nepotism," 2022).

Effects of Organizational Politics

In simple terms, organizational politics is how one uses power and social influence in the pursuit of personal or organizational goals. In cases where there is nepotism and favoritism, organizational politics is mostly displayed in the form of power rivalries, cliques, and alliances that have little to do with professional consideration (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023). This makes the workplace hostile, whereby employees are mindful that none of their efforts and results are either appreciated or rewarded.

There is a notable combination of nepotism, favoritism, and organizational politics in Pakistani institutions (Kashif, 2024). Preferential treatment is given to employees who are related to or are personally acquainted with the senior managers. This causes hatreds

and discontentment among the other employees. The direct impact is not only the erosion of trust and collaboration within the organization, but it also affects the overall productivity of the organization. The frequency of these practices suggests the important need of understanding their consequences and formulating means to lessen their effects.

These results correlate with the results which Malik et al. (2016) obtained, where their research reported that there is considerable nepotism and favoritism in Pakistani organizations, which propels organizational politics. The findings suggested that employees who are so called friends or relatives of the senior managers are always favored, which causes anger and discontent among other employees (Alwi, & Zaman, 2023). This can lead to erosion of trust and collaboration in the organization, which would in the end, affect the organization in its entirety.

Effects Toward the Employee Morale

Out of all the aspects of an organization, employee morale plays a very key role in the output. A high morale will invariably result in enhanced productivity, greater contentment at work, and less attrition, while, on the other hand, low morale can lead to reduced productivity, more absenteeism, and high turnover (Alwi, & Zaman, 2023). A culture of nepotism and favoritism can deeply erode employee morale by instilling feelings of unfairness and inequality at the workplace.

Bias and preferential treatment in Pakistani institutions have consistently demoralized employees. Employees who feel like promotions and rewards are based on relationships rather than merit are likely to become disengaged from their work. This negatively impacts organizational productivity since employees who feel undervalued are reluctant to put in their best efforts. Also, the feeling of being treated unfairly can increase employee attrition rates, which adds to the burden of the organizations even more.

The results of this study correlate with Riaz and Akhtar's 2023 research which depicted that ethical leadership plays a significant role in preventing nepotism and favoritism by ensuring transparency, equity, and accountability in other HR functions. Such studies further demonstrated the necessity of implementing programs on leadership training as they seek to prepare proactive leaders who know how to maintain ethical conduct in organizations (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023).

Approaches for Managing Nepotism and Favoritism Risk

When managing cases of nepotism as well as preferment, it is crucial to note that both will negatively impact the employee's politics and morale. One comprehensive example of tackling the issue would be formulation of detailed human resource policies geared towards addressing these social vices. For example, there are earmarked percentages for new hires and promotions, frequent evaluations of productivity, and education and skills training at every level.

Further, another example is the formulation of policies at the lower tier structures of the organization which aim to curb the social vices of nepotism and preferment. This can be done by proper and effective dissemination of communication, participation of employees in organizational decisions, and reward systems where performance of the employees is highly appreciated. Also, to lessen the negative effects of nepotism and favoritism, policies addressing these areas need to be put into place and enforced (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023).

These findings are similar to those presented by Akram and Khan (2023) who argue that

omnipresent HRM policies such as recruitment on merits, and systematic performance assessments greatly mitigate overt forms of nepotism and favoritism abuse. This study also discussed how organizational ethics influence the behavior of leaders in promoting the much needed equity and impartiality in the organization.

Ethical Leadership and the Nepotism Within Organizational Culture

The specificities of ethical leadership are relevant when discussing the highly complex, socially pervasive issues of nepotism and favoritism. Even as leaders who implement ethical decision making are polite and regardful of their staff members, equity and justice is engrained in the organizational cultures. This is also the case in Pakistan, which is ethnically diverse but ethically complex, more so because of tribal and family relations that are often poorly administered within the work environment.

The findings in this paper relate to Riaz and Akhtar's 2023 study which indicated that ethical leadership is useful in curbing nepotism and favoritism by providing equity, transparency, and accountability in other human resource functions. These studies further emphasized the importance of taking proactive measures in the form of leadership training programs to instill the needed skills to be able to refrain from unethical behavior in organizations (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023).

Technology's Impact on Neglecting Nepotism and Favoritism

The impact and use of various technology tools has risen critically over the years due to the automation of HR activities. For example, the use of AI powered tools as facilitators of employment opportunities, has helped in mitigating bias against applicants immensely. AI applications can aid in CV screening, candidate selection, and even interviewing, effectively eliminating nepotism from recruitment systems.

Integration of technology in Human Resource Management, as claimed by Kashif (2024), greatly assists in minimizing the effects of favoritism and nepotism impact. However, it must be highlighted that possessing adequate technology does not solve all problems. Employees and managers must be trained adequately in order for them to utilize the technology effectively.

The Role of Government and Regulatory Bodies

The government and the relevant organizations can do much to resolve the problems of nepotism and favoritism in Pakistan's organizations. This may also involve amending existing provisions or crafting new ones which seek to regulate nepotism and favoritism in both publicly funded and privately owned companies. For example, the government can mandate organizations to carry out audits of their hiring as well as promotion policies and as appropriate discipline those organizations which are found to behave immorally (Kashif, 2024).

In addition, the government can also run campaigns seeking to sensitize the people on the adverse impacts of nepotism and favoritism on management and development of the nation. Such campaigns can be directed to both management and subordinate staff for appreciation of the need for policies that promote merit and even in equal employment opportunity in the organization.

The Role of Educational Institutions

Such problems of favoritism can also address by different institutions. Leader are able to prepare potential managers and employees to deal such unethical practices in the workplace by instruction ethics and professional conduct in the classroom. Done with sequences for future business leaders or managers on ethical and organizational

Journal of Management & Social Science

VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

leadership, organizational behavior, human resource management, and also through workshops and seminars on employment practices with respect to affirmative action policies also.

These findings showed the conclusion that, in the long term, all organization can mold the behaviors and attitudes of employees and leaders by continue struggle. Through embedding skills and knowledge needed for ethical behavior, organizations can contribute towards a more equal and merit-based culture in the workplace always.

Conclusion

Nepotism and favoritism in HR policies and procedures remains a hallmark of concern in Pakistani organizations impacting greatly on organizational politics, employee morale, and performance. This study has observed the roots of these practices in culture, which substantively endorse ascribed relations over proficiency. The findings suggest that nepotism and favoritism deteriorate the productivity further by creating an environment which makes employees feel disenfranchised. Consequently, trust and faith in organizations break down, employees become less productive, and the degree of turnover increases (Zeeshan, & Qazi, 2023). The nexus of organization politics along with these practices further complicates issues as the existence of personal stubbornness in power puts division, rather than cooperation and impartiality, at the center of divide. The issues are daunting, however, they present an opportunity as well. Some of the transparent approaches on mitigating bias in decision-making processes such as ethical leadership or application of technological solutions can be very effective. The aggregate reduction of such practices in Pakistani organizations will enable to achieve the objective of having more equitable and meritocratically operating environment which, in turn, should improve the performance of the organizations and the welfare of the employees simultaneously.

Implications

This study carries implications for HRM professionals, leaders in organizations, policy makers, and even educational institutions. For HR professionals, the results showcase the need for adopting transparent and criteria-based hiring, retention, promotion, and reward systems. The influence of personal relations can be minimized through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), periodic appraisal systems, and systematic training. Ethical leadership is also critical. Leaders who demonstrate fairness and accountability can act as role models and foster a culture of equity. Especially in public policy, there needs to be more cultural emphasis on lifting the strict auditing and legislating curriculum for higher education, which can aid in decreasing nepotism and favoritism. Social marketing also has a role in lifting the stigma associated with merit based practices; letting the public understand the negative impact of these practices serves as a means to assist the public policy positivism shift. Schools and colleges can do their part by teaching students on ethics and professionalism, so as to adequately prepare future leaders and workers to stand against unethical behavior. Finally, introducing AI technologies, like recruitment drives based on AI algorithmically decided candidates, received the most optimistic outlook from HR experts to curb bias. All these efforts would help improve the socio-economic status of the modern workplace in Pakistan.

Future Directions

Further research needs to reinforce the concepts covered in this exploration to formulate new strategies and evaluate the competence of addressing favoritism and

nepotism within the HR functions. One suggestion is the study of different cultures to see how these practices are implemented in different regions and what measures can be used to address them in different cultures. But 'silos' are also required in understanding the phenomenon in different sectors like healthcare, education, technology, and other industries in order to devise specific solutions (Zeeshan and Qazi, 2023). One of the more useful approaches might be looking into the consequences of favoritism and nepotism in an organization with time and how these phenomena might interfere with the performance and wellness of employees. expert edits Moreover, the approach presented investigates the use of technology to address bias, including AI and other digital tools for recruitment and performance assessment. The motives and the consequences of favoritism and nepotism as well as the organizational culture that encourages such practices need to be addressed in a more sophisticated manner. Then, there is a need to analyze the firm culture which may act as a moderator to overcome the practices of favoritism and nepotism through values, norms, or even the leadership approaches that are taken at the organization.

By focusing on these gaps, researchers can help devise more effective strategies towards equitable and meritocratic workplaces in Pakistan and elsewhere in the world.

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VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

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VOL-2, ISSUE-1, 2025

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