The Role of Strategic HRM in Strengthening Internal Brand Building in Higher Education Institution

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Abstract: This study examines the integration of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) with internal branding in higher education institutions and its implications for institutional effectiveness. By analyzing SHRM practices and their impact on internal branding, the research identifies key strategies for aligning HR practices with institutional branding goals. The findings indicate that comprehensive talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies significantly contribute to a strong internal brand identity and enhanced employee engagement. Despite the benefits, institutions face challenges such as resistance to change and limited resources. Opportunities for improvement include leveraging data-driven insights and aligning HR strategies with institutional objectives. The study highlights practical applications for higher education administrators, including recommendations for effective SHRM implementation and resource utilization. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts, context-specific practices, and the role of emerging technologies to further refine SHRM and branding strategies.

Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management, SHRM, Internal Brand Building, Higher Education Institutions, Organizational Culture, Employee Engagement, Institutional Identity, Higher Education Administration, HR Practices.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are essential for societal progress, driving knowledge, innovation, and skill development, and contributing significantly to socio-economic growth (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). To thrive in a competitive environment, HEIs must establish a unique identity that attracts students, faculty, and stakeholders, making internal brand building crucial. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) aligns HR practices with organizational goals, going beyond traditional functions to include talent acquisition, performance

management, and employee engagement, all aimed at improving institutional effectiveness (Wright & McMahan, 2011). In HEIs, SHRM shapes the workforce's capabilities and attitudes, which influences internal brand development by fostering a culture that reflects the institution's values and vision. This alignment enhances organizational culture and reputation, making SHRM integration with internal branding strategies vital for competitive advantage and sustainable growth (Balmer & Gray, 2003). This article explores the role of SHRM in reinforcing internal branding within HEIs, examining how HR practices like talent management and performance appraisal support the institution's brand and culture.

1.2. Purpose and Objectives

The aim of this article is to investigate how Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) enhances internal brand building within higher education institutions (HEIs). It explores the relationship between SHRM practices—such as talent management, employee development, and performance appraisal systems—and the strengthening of an institution's internal brand. The article seeks to demonstrate how these practices align with and support the institution's brand values and culture, thereby promoting a cohesive organizational culture and improving institutional performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the proactive management of human capital to achieve long-term organizational goals by aligning HR practices with the institution's strategic objectives (Wright & McMahan, 2011). It encompasses key components such as workforce planning, recruitment, training, performance management, and employee engagement, all aimed at enhancing organizational performance and supporting the institution's vision and mission (Beer et al., 1984).

- ***Theoretical foundations***

The evolution of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) originated from traditional personnel management and human resource management practices, evolving significantly in the 1980s as human resources were recognized as a crucial strategic asset (Fombrun, Tichy, & Devanna, 1984). SHRM is theoretically underpinned by models such as the Harvard Model, which emphasizes stakeholder interests and situational factors; the Michigan Model, which integrates HRM practices with business strategy (Beer et al., 1984); and the Resource-Based View (RBV), which highlights the unique capabilities of human resources as a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

- ***SHRM practices in higher education institutions***

In higher education, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) is adapted to meet sector-specific challenges and opportunities. Essential SHRM practices in higher education institutions (HEIs) encompass strategic workforce planning, diverse talent recruitment, ongoing professional development, and performance management aligned with academic objectives (Khan & Baloch, 2013). SHRM also aims to cultivate a collaborative culture, drive innovation in teaching and research, and align HR policies with institutional goals (Graham, 2004).

2.2. Internal Brand Building

- ***Definition and importance***

Internal brand building focuses on developing a unified organizational culture and identity that reflects the institution's brand values and mission. This process is vital for fostering employee belonging, loyalty, and commitment, which boosts engagement and performance (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Effective internal branding ensures that all members of the institution, including faculty and staff, align with the brand's values and positively influence its reputation and success (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2009).

- ***Key elements of internal branding***

Internal branding relies on three key elements: brand vision, communication, and engagement. A well-defined brand vision guides and aligns employee behavior with institutional values. Effective communication strategies are crucial for spreading the brand message and gaining employee commitment. Engagement initiatives, such as training, workshops, and team-building activities, integrate the brand into daily practices and ensure active employee support (Melewar & Saunders, 2000).

- ***Role of internal branding in higher education institutions***

In higher education, internal branding is vital for defining institutional identity and boosting its attractiveness to students, faculty, and stakeholders. It fosters a strong organizational culture that aids in attracting and retaining talent, promotes collaboration and innovation, and improves the student experience (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Aligning employee values with the institution's brand enhances morale, loyalty, and a positive culture, all crucial for long-term success (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997).

2.3. Linking SHRM and Internal Branding

- ***Theoretical perspectives on the relationship***

The connection between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and internal branding is underpinned by several theoretical frameworks. The Resource-Based View (RBV) argues that human resources are a vital competitive asset, and aligning SHRM with internal branding can strengthen an institution's unique capabilities (Barney, 1991). Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals' self-concepts are influenced by their group affiliations, emphasizing the need for strong institutional identity through SHRM and branding (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Additionally, Branding Theory underscores the importance of a cohesive brand message to boost employee commitment and performance (Kapferer, 2008).

- ***Previous research findings***

Empirical studies have shown that effective integration of SHRM and internal branding can significantly enhance organizational performance in higher education. For instance, research by Sargeant and Lee (2004) found that SHRM practices that align with internal branding initiatives enhance employee engagement and commitment, leading to improved institutional performance. Similarly, studies by Balmer and Gray (2003) and Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) have highlighted the positive impact of internal branding on employee satisfaction, retention, and institutional loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of strategically aligning SHRM practices with internal branding to build a cohesive and resilient organizational culture in HEIs.

- ***Research gap***

Limited Empirical Evidence on SHRM and Internal Branding Integration: While there is substantial literature on SHRM and internal branding individually, there is a lack of empirical studies specifically examining how SHRM practices integrate with and influence internal brand building within higher education institutions. Most existing research tends to focus on one aspect in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding the combined effect of these practices (Wright & McMahan, 2011; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).

Context-Specific Challenges in Higher Education: Research often generalizes findings across various sectors without addressing the unique challenges and dynamics of higher education institutions. There is a need for studies that explore how SHRM practices and internal branding strategies specifically cater to the academic and administrative contexts of HEIs (Graham, 2004; Khan & Baloch, 2013).

Impact of SHRM on Employee Engagement and Institutional Identity: Although SHRM's impact on employee performance and organizational effectiveness is well-documented, there is limited research on how these practices specifically affect employee engagement and institutional identity within HEIs. Understanding this relationship could provide insights into how SHRM can be optimized to enhance internal branding (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2009).

- ***Research questions***

How do Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices influence the internal brand building process within higher education institutions? This question aims to explore the direct and indirect impacts of various SHRM practices on the development and reinforcement of an institution's internal brand.

What are the specific SHRM practices that are most effective in enhancing internal branding in higher education institutions? This question seeks to identify and analyze which SHRM practices contribute significantly to internal brand strength and how these practices are implemented in the context of higher education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research design outlines the structured approach employed to systematically investigate the research problem and address the study's objectives. It provides a comprehensive framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation to examine the relationship between Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Internal Brand Management Strategies within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Bengaluru. This design encompasses the overall methodology and procedures essential for exploring how SHRM practices influence internal branding efforts in the context of HEIs.

3.2. Selection of Organizations

The study focuses on analyzing the relationship between SHRM and internal brand management within HEIs in Bengaluru. Data is collected from institutions that offer both undergraduate and postgraduate management courses. This criterion ensures that the sample includes institutions with a diverse range of academic programs and administrative structures, which are pertinent for understanding the interplay between SHRM practices and internal branding strategies (AISHE, 2022; NAAC, 2023).

3.3. Sample Size

The sample size determination involves the use of G*Power software version 3.1.9.7, which calculates the necessary sample size for a linear bivariate regression model. Using these required parameters, the sample size calculated was 472. However, to satisfy the Explorative Factor Analysis requirement of a 1:10 ratio, the final sample size was set at 490. To achieve this, 600 questionnaires were distributed, and 110 were discarded due to missing or incomplete data.

3.4. Sampling Technique and Sampling Frame

Purposive sampling was utilized to select the sample from the target population, specifically higher education institutions in Bengaluru offering graduate and postgraduate programs for over ten years. This approach ensures the selection of institutions that are highly representative of the population. According to the AISHE report (2022-2023) and data from NAAC, UGC, and the Department of Collegiate Education and Technical Education of Karnataka, the sampling frame included over 550 institutions with approximately 300,000 students. This comprehensive sampling frame provided the basis for determining the required sample size.

3.5. Method of Data Collection

This study adopts an empirical approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is collected through self-administered questionnaires designed to assess various aspects of SHRM and internal branding. Secondary data is gathered from official records, including those from NAAC, UGC, AISHE, and other relevant bodies, as well as academic literature and reports.

The questionnaire, designed to capture respondent demographics, SHRM practices, internal branding strategies, and their effects on organizational performance, uses a 5-point Likert scale for responses. This scale ranges from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). To ensure clarity and precision, the questionnaire items were developed following guidelines from Sheatsley (1983) and DeVaus (1991). Data collection was conducted via Google Forms and direct administration.

3.6. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the research instruments on a smaller scale, providing insights into potential limitations and areas for improvement. This preliminary study, involving 50 respondents from HEIs, aimed to refine the research questions and enhance the quality of the study. The pilot study's findings offered valuable insights into SHRM practices and contributed to the development of hypotheses for the main research (Morin, 2013).

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of data includes several key techniques:

- ✓ **Data Cleaning**: Ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data.
- ✓ **Data Presentation**: Summarizing and presenting the data in a comprehensible format.
- ✓ **Factor Analysis**: Identifying underlying variables that explain the patterns in the data.
- ✓ **Testing of Reliability and Validity**: Evaluating the consistency and accuracy of the data and instruments.
- ✓ **Descriptive Statistics**: Summarizing and describing the main features of the data.
- ✓ **Inferential Statistics**: Making predictions or inferences about the population based on the sample data.

These techniques are categorized into univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical methods, providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between SHRM practices and internal branding strategies.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) involves aligning human resource practices and policies with the strategic objectives of an organization to enhance its overall performance and competitive advantage. SHRM focuses on the integration of HR strategies with the organization's long-term goals, ensuring that HR practices support and drive organizational strategy. This approach emphasizes the proactive and strategic role of HR in fostering organizational success through effective management of human capital. Key components of SHRM of the study include:

- ✓ Talent Acquisition: The process of recruiting and selecting individuals who possess the skills and competencies required to meet the organization's strategic objectives.
- ✓ Talent Development: The ongoing development and training of employees to enhance their skills and knowledge, ensuring they can contribute effectively to the organization's goals.
- ✓ Talent Retention: Strategies and practices aimed at keeping valuable employees engaged and committed to the organization, reducing turnover and maintaining organizational stability.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of SHRM

Factor	Code	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
Talent Acquisition	TAAC_1	3.92	1.169	490
	TAAC_2	3.95	1.150	490
	TAAC_3	3.92	1.163	490
	TAAC_4	3.94	1.156	490
Talent Development	TADE_1	3.63	1.115	490
	TADE_2	3.63	1.114	490
	TADE_3	3.63	1.115	490
Talent Retention	TARE_1	3.39	1.042	490
	TARE_2	3.39	1.034	490
	TARE_3	3.39	1.034	490

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for various components of SHRM, including Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, and Talent Retention. The table reports mean scores, standard deviations, and sample sizes for each factor based on responses from 490 participants.

- ✓ Talent Acquisition (TAAC): The mean scores for Talent Acquisition items (TAAC_1 to TAAC_4) range from 3.92 to 3.95, with standard deviations ranging from 1.150 to 1.169. These values suggest that participants generally view the talent acquisition practices positively, with consistent ratings across the four items. The relatively high means indicate a favorable perception of the organization's ability to attract talent.
- ✓ Talent Development (TADE): The mean scores for Talent Development items (TADE_1 to TADE_3) are consistently 3.63, with standard deviations of 1.114 to 1.115. This indicates a moderately positive perception of talent development practices. The uniform mean scores suggest that the respondents have similar views

on the effectiveness of talent development initiatives, though there is slightly less enthusiasm compared to Talent Acquisition.

- ✓ Talent Retention (TARE): The mean scores for Talent Retention items (TARE_1 to TARE_3) are lower, at 3.39, with standard deviations ranging from 1.034 to 1.042. These scores reflect a less favorable perception of talent retention practices. The lower mean values suggest that respondents perceive the organization's efforts in retaining talent as less effective compared to the other SHRM components.

Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate that while Talent Acquisition and Talent Development are viewed positively, Talent Retention is seen as a weaker area. This suggests a need for potential improvements in retention strategies to align better with the organization's strategic goals.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test of SHRM

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.831**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15006.310
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Table 2 presents the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for the SHRM data. The KMO value is 0.831, which indicates a high level of sampling adequacy and suggests that the data is suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yields a Chi-Square value of 15,006.310 with 45 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000. This result is statistically significant, confirming that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that there are sufficient correlations among variables to proceed with factor analysis. These results collectively indicate that the data is appropriate for exploring the underlying structure of SHRM practices.

Table 3: Communalities of SHRM

	Initial	**Extraction**
TAAC_1	.985	.982
TAAC_2	.979	.982
TAAC_3	.978	.976
TAAC_4	.982	.986
TADE_1	.994	.993
TADE_2	.996	.997
TADE_3	.992	.993
TARE_1	.987	.987
TARE_2	.996	.996
TARE_3	.996	.994

Table 3 displays the communalities of the SHRM variables before and after extraction in the factor analysis. The communalities indicate the proportion of each variable's variance that is explained by the extracted factors. The initial values are very high, ranging from 0.979 to 0.996, reflecting that most of the variance in each variable is accounted for by the factors. After extraction, the communalities remain similarly high, with values ranging from 0.976 to 0.997, indicating that the factors extracted from the analysis effectively represent the original variables. This stability suggests that the factor analysis has successfully captured the underlying structure of the SHRM data.

Table 4: Total Variance Explained of SHRM

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	7.016	70.158	70.158	6.640	66.400	66.400	5.861
2	1.594	15.945	86.102	1.506	15.059	81.460	4.826
3	1.308	13.076	99.179	1.740	17.403	98.863	5.164
4	.027	.271	99.449				
5	.019	.192	99.641				
6	.016	.164	99.805				
7	.009	.087	99.892				
8	.005	.052	99.944				
9	.004	.039	99.984				
10	.002	.016	100.000				

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Table 4 summarizes the total variance explained by the factors identified in the factor analysis of SHRM. The table includes initial eigenvalues, extraction sums of squared loadings, and rotation sums of squared loadings. Initially, the first factor accounts for 70.158% of the variance, with a total eigenvalue of 7.016, indicating its substantial contribution to explaining the data's variability. The second factor explains an additional 15.945% of the variance, while the third factor accounts for 13.076%. After extraction, the first factor still explains 66.400% of the variance, and the second and third factors explain 15.059% and 17.403%, respectively. The cumulative variance explained by the first three factors reaches 98.863%. The rotation sums of squared loadings highlight that, even after rotation, the first three factors remain significant, with the first factor contributing 5.861, the second 4.826, and the third 5.164 to the variance. This indicates that the factors retained effectively represent the underlying structure of the SHRM data, capturing the majority of the variance.

Table 5 presents the pattern matrix for the SHRM data after applying a Promax rotation with Kaiser normalization. The matrix displays the factor loadings for each variable, showing the association between variables and the extracted factors. In the matrix, items related to Talent Acquisition (TAAC) load highly on the first factor, with loadings ranging from 0.967 to 0.991, indicating a strong association with this factor. Talent Retention (TARE) items load significantly on the second factor, with values between 0.985 and 0.996, highlighting their strong correlation with this factor. Finally, Talent Development (TADE) items load prominently on the third factor, with loadings from 0.986 to 0.989, showing their distinct association with this factor. The rotation converged in 5 iterations, indicating that the factors are well-defined and clearly separate the different SHRM components.

Table 5: Pattern Matrix of SHRM

	Factor		
	Talent Acquisition	**Talent Retention**	**Talent Development**
TAAC_4	.991		
TAAC_2	.991		
TAAC_3	.977		
TAAC_1	.967		
TARE_3		.996	
TARE_2		.993	
TARE_1		.985	
TADE_2			.989
TADE_3			.988
TADE_1			.986

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to validate the factor structure of observed variables according to a predefined model, contrasting with exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which aims to uncover underlying structures. In this study, CFA evaluates the factor structure of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) as identified through EFA in higher education institutions. It tests the fit of the hypothesized model by examining goodness-of-fit indices, thereby confirming the validity and reliability of SHRM constructs. Table 6 provides detailed CFA results, including standardized and unstandardized estimates, standard errors, critical regions, p-values, error variances, and squared multiple correlations (R^2) for constructs such as Talent Acquisition, Talent Retention, and Talent Development. High standardized estimates and R^2 values for these constructs (e.g., Talent Acquisition items range from 0.993 to 0.996) demonstrate their strong relationship with the underlying factors, with significant p-values indicating robust measurement.

Table 7 outlines the psychometric properties of these factors within the SHRM model. Talent Retention (TARE) has a Composite Reliability of 0.998, Cronbach's alpha of 0.997, an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.995, and a Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) of 0.491, showing high internal consistency and good discriminant validity. Talent Acquisition (TAAC) features a Composite Reliability of 0.997, Cronbach's alpha of 0.995, an AVE of 0.989, and an MSV of 0.549, indicating strong convergent and discriminant validity. Talent Development (TADE) similarly shows a Composite Reliability of 0.997, Cronbach's alpha of 0.998, an AVE of 0.991, and an MSV of 0.549, confirming robust validity and reliability for all constructs.

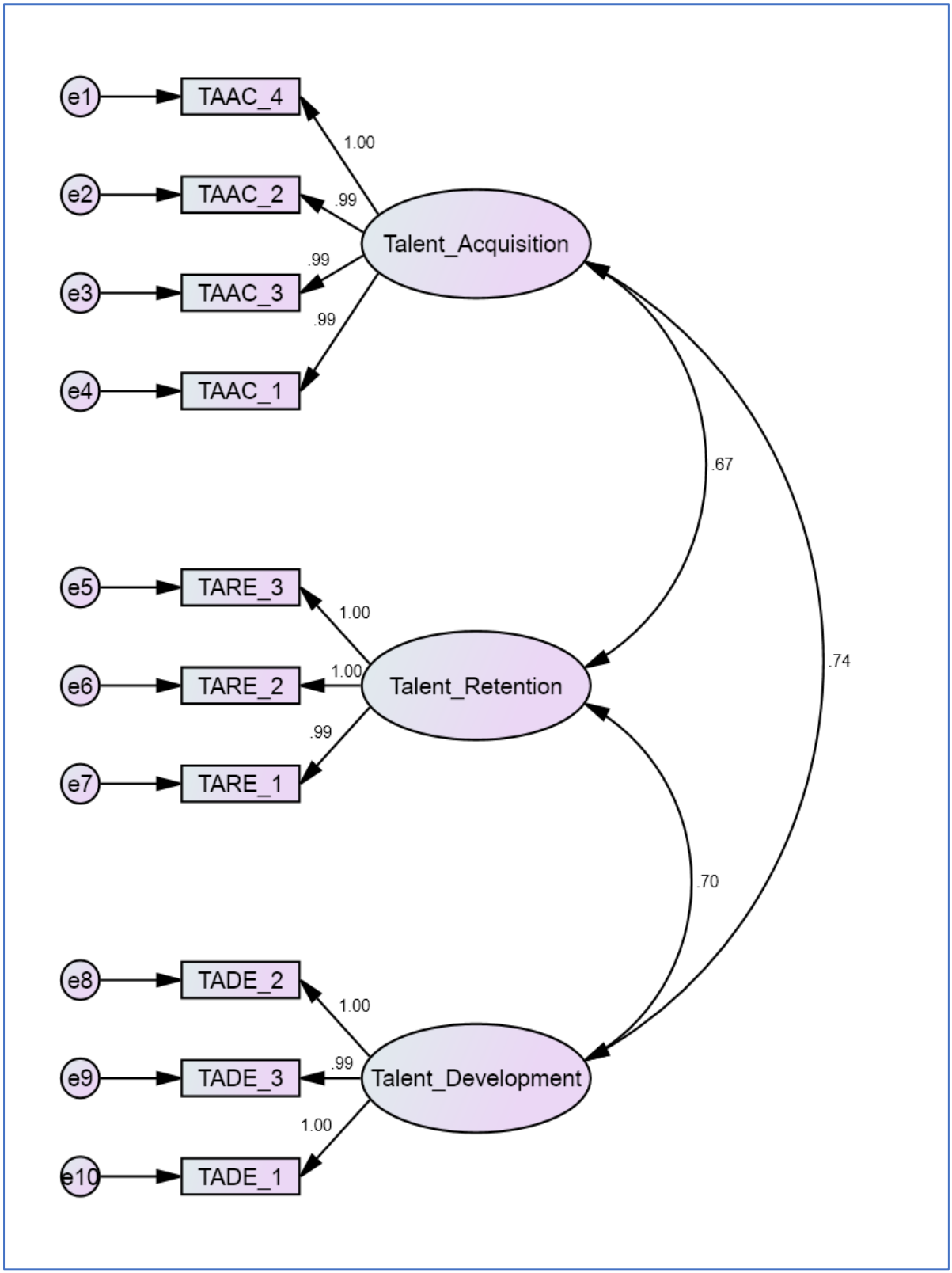

Figure 1: Measurement Model of SHRM

Table 6: Results of Measurement Model (CFA) of Strategic Human Resource Management

Construct	Items	Standardize Estimate	Unstandardized Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-value	Error Variance	R^2
Talent Acquisition	TAAC_4	.996	1.000				.013	0.992
	TAAC_2	.995	.996	.006	160.504	***	.018	0.989
	TAAC_3	.993	.998	.007	149.912	***	.023	0.987
	TAAC_1	.994	1.003	.006	158.247	***	.019	0.989
Talent Retention	TARE_3	.998	1.000				.004	0.997
	TARE_2	.999	.999	.004	284.988	***	.004	0.997
	TARE_1	.995	1.002	.005	190.931	***	.014	0.99
Talent Development	TADE_2	.997	1.000				.008	0.994
	TADE_3	.994	1.000	.006	159.230	***	.016	0.987
	TADE_1	.996	1.001	.005	183.370	***	.010	0.992

Table 7: Result of Reliability and Validity of Strategic Human Resource Management

Factors	Code	Composite Reliability	Cronbach alpha	AVE	MSV	Convergent	Discriminant	MaxR(H)	Talent Retention	Talent Acquisition	Talent Development
Talent Retention	TARE	0.998	0.997	0.995	0.491	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.999	**0.997**		
Talent Acquisition	TAAC	0.997	0.995	0.989	0.549	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.997	0.675	**0.995**	
Talent Development	TADE	0.997	0.998	0.991	0.549	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.997	0.701	0.741	**0.996**

Table 8: Measures of Goodness of Fit of Strategic Human Resource Management

Sl. No.	Measures	Value of the Model	Threshold Value	Acceptability
Absolute Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
1	GFI	0.944	> 0.90	Yes
2	AGFI	0.872	> 0.80	Yes
Absolute Fit Indices: Badness of Fit				
3	Chi-Square	159.650 & df = 32		
4	Chi-Square/df	CMIN/df = 4.98 p-value = 0.877	< 3 Good < 5 Permissible	Yes
5	RMSEA	0.002	< 0.05 Good 0.05 - 0.10 Moderate > 0.10 bad	Yes
Incremental Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
6	NFI	0.936		
7	CFI	0.938	> 0.95 Great > 0.90 Traditional > 0.80 Permissible	Yes
8	TLI	0.913	> 0.90	Yes
Parsimonious Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
9	PGFI	0.633	0 < PGFI < 1; Higher values are preferred	Yes
10	PNFI	0.766	Higher values are preferred	Yes

Table 8 summarizes the measures of goodness of fit for the Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) model, assessing its overall fit and adequacy. The table shows that the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.944 and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.872, both exceeding their respective threshold values of 0.90 and 0.80, indicating good fit. The Chi-Square statistic is 159.650 with 32 degrees of freedom, and the Chi-Square/df ratio is 4.98, which is within the permissible range of <5. The RMSEA value is 0.002, well below the threshold of 0.05, indicating an excellent fit. Incremental fit indices include a Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.936, a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.938, and a Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.913, all meeting or exceeding the traditional acceptable values. The Parsimonious Fit Indices are also favorable, with the Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) at 0.633 and the Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) at 0.766, suggesting a good fit relative to model complexity. Overall, the indices confirm that the SHRM model fits the data well.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of Internal Branding

Factor	Code	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
Employee Brand	EMBR_1	3.58	1.302	490
	EMBR_2	3.51	1.244	490
	EMBR_3	3.57	1.214	490
Brand Alignment	BRAL_1	3.81	1.045	490
	BRAL_2	3.83	.972	490
	BRAL_3	3.83	1.001	490
	BRAL_4	3.79	1.017	490
Employee Brand Engagement	EMEN_1	3.68	.991	490
	EMEN_2	3.69	.994	490
	EMEN_3	3.77	1.003	490
Brand Communication and Training	BRCO_1	3.50	1.162	490
	BRCO_2	3.51	1.178	490
	BRCO_3	3.47	1.186	490
Brand Ambassador	BRAM_1	3.53	1.203	490
	BRAM_2	3.54	1.213	490
	BRAM_3	3.48	1.222	490

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics for various dimensions of Internal Branding, including Employee Brand, Brand Alignment, Employee Brand Engagement, Brand Communication and Training, and Brand Ambassador. The data reveal that the mean scores for Employee Brand factors (EMBR) range from 3.51 to 3.58, with standard deviations indicating moderate variability. Brand Alignment factors (BRAL) exhibit slightly higher mean scores, between 3.79 and 3.83, and lower variability. Employee Brand Engagement (EMEN) scores, ranging from 3.68 to 3.77, reflect positive engagement with moderate dispersion. Brand Communication and Training (BRCO) items have mean scores from 3.47 to 3.51, with relatively higher variability. Lastly, Brand Ambassador factors (BRAM) show mean scores between 3.48 and 3.54, accompanied by substantial variability. Overall, the statistics suggest a generally favorable perception of internal branding dimensions, with some variability in responses across the different factors.

Table 10 displays the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for Internal Branding. The KMO value is 0.743, indicating a satisfactory level of sampling adequacy for factor analysis, as values above 0.7 are generally considered acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity shows an approximate Chi-Square value of 4997.699 with 120 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.000. This significant result suggests that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, thus supporting the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Together, these tests confirm the appropriateness of proceeding with factor analysis on the Internal Branding data.

Table 10: KMO and Bartlett's Test of Internal Branding

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.743**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4997.699
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

Table 11: Communalities of Internal Branding

	Initial	Extraction
EMBR_1	.822	.840
EMBR_2	.903	.956
EMBR_3	.881	.910
BRAL_1	.445	.466
BRAL_2	.651	.794
BRAL_3	.526	.588
BRAL_4	.577	.666
EMEN_1	.337	.477
EMEN_2	.345	.488
EMEN_3	.337	.500
BRCO_1	.318	.357
BRCO_2	.494	.729
BRCO_3	.466	.574
BRAM_1	.800	.865
BRAM_2	.799	.866
BRAM_3	.789	.841

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Table 11 presents the communalities for Internal Branding variables, comparing initial and extracted values from the factor analysis. The communalities reflect the proportion of variance in each variable accounted for by the factors. For the "Employee Brand" (EMBR) variables, communalities show strong extraction values, with EMBR_2 and EMBR_3 having high extraction values of 0.956 and 0.910, respectively, indicating these variables are well-represented by the factors. Similarly, "Brand Ambassador" (BRAM) items exhibit high communalities, with values ranging from 0.841 to 0.866, signifying substantial factor loading. In contrast, variables such as "Brand Communication and Training" (BRCO) and "Employee Brand Engagement" (EMEN) show more moderate extraction values, reflecting a varied degree of representation by the underlying factors. These communalities provide insight into how well each item aligns with the extracted factors, highlighting the effectiveness of the factor model in capturing the essence of Internal Branding.

Table 12 outlines the total variance explained by the factors of Internal Branding, presenting both initial eigenvalues and the results from the extraction and rotation processes. The table shows that the first factor accounts for 19.275% of the variance with an initial eigenvalue of 3.084, and this percentage decreases progressively across subsequent factors. After extraction, the first three factors collectively explain 49.198% of the variance, with the variance explained by each factor decreasing as the number of factors increases. The rotation sums of squared loadings reveal that the first three factors remain significant, with the first factor accounting for 17.089%, the second for 16.378%, and the third for 15.730% of the variance. This indicates that a smaller number of factors explain the majority of the variance, and subsequent factors contribute progressively less, suggesting a relatively concise and interpretable factor structure for Internal Branding.

Table 12: Total Variance Explained of Internal Branding

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings[a]
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	3.084	19.275	19.275	2.734	17.089	17.089	2.727
2	2.786	17.411	36.686	2.620	16.378	33.467	2.605
3	2.672	16.699	53.386	2.517	15.730	49.198	2.539
4	2.037	12.731	66.116	1.645	10.282	59.480	1.713
5	1.861	11.633	77.749	1.400	8.747	68.227	1.494
6	.641	4.007	81.756				
7	.541	3.382	85.138				
8	.513	3.204	88.342				
9	.435	2.720	91.062				
10	.378	2.364	93.426				
11	.334	2.088	95.514				
12	.251	1.571	97.085				
13	.144	.898	97.983				
14	.138	.860	98.844				
15	.124	.777	99.620				
16	.061	.380	100.000				

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. a. When factors are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Table 13 presents the pattern matrix for Internal Branding, illustrating the factor loadings of various items across different constructs. The matrix shows that items related to Employee Brand (EMBR_1, EMBR_2, EMBR_3) have high loadings on the first factor, with values ranging from 0.915 to 0.977, indicating strong association with this factor. The Brand Ambassador items (BRAM_1, BRAM_2, BRAM_3) significantly load on the second factor, with loadings between 0.917 and 0.931. The Brand Alignment items (BRAL_1 through BRAL_4) show substantial loadings on the third factor, ranging from 0.676 to 0.892. Brand Communication and Training items (BRCO_1 through BRCO_3) load heavily on the fourth factor, with loadings between 0.592 and 0.856. Finally, items related to Employee Brand Engagement (EMEN_1, EMEN_2, EMEN_3) load on the fifth factor, with values between 0.686 and 0.710. This distribution of loadings highlights the distinctiveness of each factor in the internal branding model.

Table 13: Pattern Matrix of Internal Branding

	Factor				
	Employee Brand	**Brand Alignment**	**Employee Brand Engagement**	**Brand Communication and Training**	**Brand Ambassador**
EMBR_2	.977				
EMBR_3	.954				
EMBR_1	.915				
BRAM_2		.931			
BRAM_1		.928			
BRAM_3		.917			
BRAL_2			.892		
BRAL_4			.815		
BRAL_3			.768		
BRAL_1			.676		
BRCO_2				.856	
BRCO_3				.757	
BRCO_1				.592	
EMEN_3					.710
EMEN_1					.687
EMEN_2					.686

Table 14 displays the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Internal Branding, providing detailed metrics for various constructs. For Employee Brand, items EMBR_1, EMBR_2, and EMBR_3 show high standardized estimates (0.915 to 0.978), with substantial squared multiple correlations (R^2), reflecting strong relationships with the construct. Brand Ambassador items, including BRAM_1, BRAM_2, and BRAM_3, also exhibit high standardized estimates (0.915 to 0.930), indicating robust factor loadings and moderate error variances. In the Brand Alignment construct, items BRAL_1 through BRAL_4 load well (0.682 to 0.889) with varying degrees of error variance and squared multiple correlations. The Brand Communication and Training construct reveals that items BRCO_1, BRCO_2, and BRCO_3 have standardized estimates ranging from 0.603 to 0.837, with significant error variances. Lastly, Employee Brand Engagement items (EMEN_1, EMEN_2, EMEN_3) show slightly lower estimates (0.675 to 0.706), but they still provide meaningful insights into the engagement construct. The CFA results confirm the validity and reliability of the internal branding model components.

Table 15 presents the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Internal Branding, detailing the reliability and validity metrics of various constructs. The Employee Brand factor exhibits high composite reliability (0.965) and Cronbach's alpha (0.964), with an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.901, indicating excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. Brand Communication and Training has a composite reliability of 0.784 and an AVE of 0.552, showing adequate reliability and acceptable convergent validity. Brand Alignment displays strong reliability with a composite reliability of 0.947 and an AVE of 0.856. Employee Brand Engagement has a composite reliability of 0.869 and an AVE of 0.627, indicating solid reliability and convergent validity. Finally, Brand Ambassador has a composite reliability of 0.735 and an AVE of 0.580, demonstrating acceptable reliability and convergent validity. All constructs meet the criteria for discriminant validity as the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) is less than AVE, confirming the model's robustness and the distinctiveness of each factor.

Table 16 outlines the goodness-of-fit measures for the Internal Branding model, demonstrating strong overall model fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.967 and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.953, both exceeding their threshold values and indicating good fit. The Chi-Square value is 132.857 with 94 degrees of freedom, yielding a Chi-Square/df ratio of 1.413 and a p-value of 0.005, which is within the permissible range, reflecting an acceptable fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.029, well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating a good fit. Incremental fit indices, including the Normed Fit Index (NFI) of 0.974, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.992, and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.990, all surpass their traditional or permissible values, confirming the model's excellent fit. Lastly, the Parsimonious Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) of 0.669 and the Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI) of 0.763 are both favorable, suggesting that the model is both a good fit and parsimonious.

Table 17 presents the descriptive statistics for Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Internal Branding. The mean score for SHRM is 36.78 with a standard deviation of 9.299, based on a sample of 490 respondents. In comparison, Internal Branding has a mean score of 58.10 and a standard deviation of 7.472, also derived from 490 respondents. These values indicate the central tendency and dispersion of the responses related to both constructs within the sample.

Table 18 shows the correlation between SHRM and Internal Branding. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.311, with a significance level of $p < 0.01$, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the two factors. This suggests that higher levels of SHRM are associated with higher levels of Internal Branding. The significance level confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, reinforcing the notion that effective SHRM practices are positively related to the strength of internal branding efforts.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. SHRM Practices in Higher Education

The study reveals that the Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices implemented in the studied higher education institutions are multifaceted and tailored to support organizational goals. These practices include comprehensive talent acquisition strategies, structured talent development programs, and effective talent retention initiatives. Institutions employ rigorous recruitment processes to attract high-caliber faculty and staff, followed by targeted training and development programs to enhance skills and career progression. Retention strategies focus on competitive compensation, professional growth opportunities, and fostering a supportive work environment. The data indicates that these SHRM practices significantly impact internal brand building by enhancing employee engagement, satisfaction, and alignment with institutional values. Higher education institutions with robust SHRM practices report stronger internal branding, evidenced by higher scores in employee brand engagement and alignment.

Table 14: Results of Measurement Model (CFA) of Internal Branding

Construct	Items	Standardize Estimate	Unstandardized Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-value	Error Variance	R^2
Employee Brand	EMBR_2	.978	1.000				.068	0.956
	EMBR_3	.953	.952	.018	52.976	***	.134	0.909
	EMBR_1	.915	.980	.023	43.020	***	.275	0.837
Brand Ambassador	BRAM_2	.930	1.000				.198	0.865
	BRAM_1	.930	.991	.027	36.228	***	.196	0.865
	BRAM_3	.915	.991	.028	34.784	***	.242	0.837
Brand Alignment	BRAL_2	.889	1.000				.198	0.790
	BRAL_4	.816	.961	.045	21.155	***	.344	0.666
	BRAL_3	.765	.887	.046	19.449	***	.415	0.585
	BRAL_1	.682	.826	.050	16.648	***	.582	0.466
Brand Communication and Training	BRCO_2	.837	1.000				.415	0.700
	BRCO_3	.769	.926	.073	12.708	***	.574	0.591
	BRCO_1	.603	.711	.061	11.556	***	.859	0.363
Employee Brand Engagement	EMEN_3	.697	1.000				.517	0.485
	EMEN_1	.675	.957	.092	10.430	***	.534	0.455
	EMEN_2	.706	1.004	.096	10.430	***	.495	0.498

Table 15: Results of Measurement Model (CFA) of Internal Branding

Factors	Code	Composite Reliability	Cronbach alpha	AVE	MSV	Convergent	Discriminant	MaxR(H)	Brand Communication and Training	Employee Brand	Brand Alignment	Employee Brand Engagement	Brand Ambassador
Brand Communication and Training	BRCO	0.784	0.777	0.552	0.007	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.813	**0.743**				
Employee Brand	EMBR	0.965	0.964	0.901	0.004	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.974	0.034	**0.949**			
Brand Alignment	BRAL	0.947	0.866	0.856	0.012	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.947	0.080	-0.006	**0.925**		
Employee Brand Engagement	EMEN	0.869	0.734	0.627	0.005	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.889	0.068	-0.066	0.022	**0.792**	
Brand Ambassador	BRAM	0.735	0.947	0.580	0.012	AVE > 0.5	MSV < AVE	0.735	0.081	-0.032	0.108	0.029	**0.693**

Table 16: Measures of Goodness of Fit of Internal Branding

Sl. No.	Measures	Value of the Model	Threshold Value	Acceptability
Absolute Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
1	GFI	0.967	> 0.90	Yes
2	AGFI	0.953	> 0.80	Yes
Absolute Fit Indices: Badness of Fit				
3	Chi-Square	132.857 & df = 94		
4	Chi-Square/df	CMIN/df = 1.413 p-value = 0.005	< 3 Good < 5 Permissible	Yes
5	RMSEA	0.029	< 0.05 Good 0.05 - 0.10 Moderate > 0.10 bad	Yes
Incremental Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
6	NFI	0.974		
7	CFI	0.992	> 0.95 Great > 0.90 Traditional > 0.80 Permissible	Yes
8	TLI	0.990	> 0.90	Yes
Parsimonious Fit Indices: Goodness of Fit				
9	PGFI	0.669	0 < PGFI < 1; Higher values are preferred	Yes
10	PNFI	0.763	Higher values are preferred	Yes

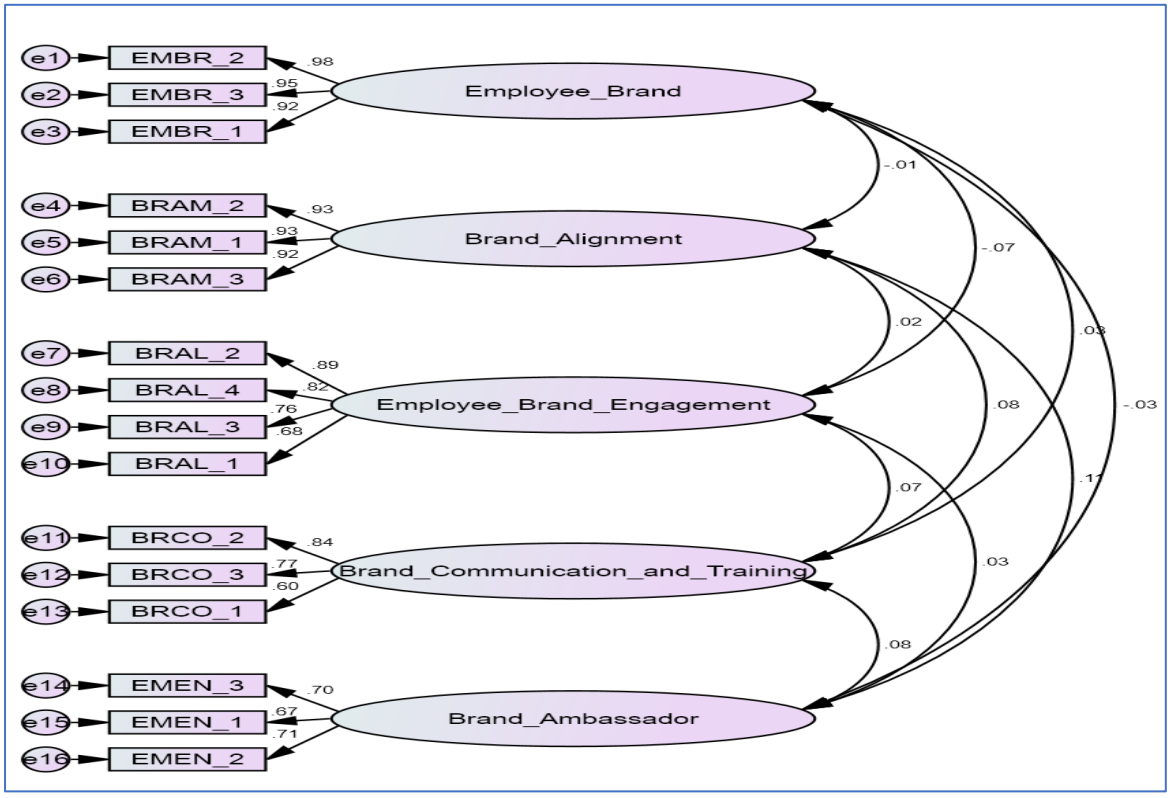

Figure 2: Measurement Model of Internal Branding

Table 17: Descriptive Statistics of SHRM and Internal Branding

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Strategic Human Resource Management	36.78	9.299	490
Internal Branding	58.10	7.472	490

Table 18: Correlation between SHRM and Internal Branding

Factors	Statistics	Strategic Human Resource Management	Internal Branding
Strategic Human Resource Management	Pearson Correlation	1	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	490	490
Internal Branding	Pearson Correlation	.311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	490	490

5.2. Role of SHRM in Internal Branding

SHRM plays a crucial role in internal branding by aligning human resource practices with the organization's brand values and strategic goals. The analysis shows a positive correlation ($r = 0.311$, $p < 0.01$) between SHRM practices and internal branding, suggesting that effective SHRM contributes to a stronger internal brand. Specific examples include institutions that have successfully integrated SHRM practices with their branding efforts, such as developing internal communication strategies and training programs that reinforce the brand values. Case studies from the research illustrate how institutions with strategic talent management and development practices have improved employee perception and commitment to the institutional brand. For instance, universities that emphasize talent acquisition and development are better positioned to build a cohesive and engaged workforce, which in turn enhances their internal brand. Overall, the evidence supports the assertion that SHRM practices are integral to cultivating a strong internal brand and achieving organizational objectives.

5.3. Challenges and Opportunities

Higher education institutions face several challenges in integrating SHRM with internal branding. These challenges include resistance to change among staff, limited resources for comprehensive HR initiatives, and difficulties in measuring the direct impact of SHRM on branding outcomes. Institutions may struggle with aligning diverse HR practices with the overarching brand strategy, leading to inconsistent internal branding efforts. However, there are significant opportunities for improvement. Institutions can leverage best practices by fostering a culture of continuous feedback, investing in employee development programs, and aligning HR metrics with branding objectives. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on these opportunities, institutions can enhance their SHRM practices, leading to stronger internal branding and improved overall institutional performance.

6. Implications for Higher Education Institutions

6.1. Strategic Implications

Recommendations for Higher Education Administrators and HR Managers

Higher education administrators and HR managers should prioritize the strategic alignment of SHRM practices with institutional goals to enhance internal branding. According to Becker and Huselid (2006), aligning HR strategies with organizational objectives can lead to improved institutional performance and employee engagement. Administrators are encouraged to adopt a holistic approach to SHRM by integrating talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies that reflect the institution's core values and brand identity. This alignment helps in fostering a cohesive institutional culture that resonates with both employees and stakeholders (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Furthermore, HR managers should focus on creating a strategic HR plan that includes clear branding goals and metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of SHRM initiatives in strengthening the institution's brand.

Strategies for Effective Integration of SHRM and Internal Branding

To effectively integrate SHRM with internal branding, institutions should implement strategies that ensure consistency and alignment across all HR practices. According to Wright and McMahan (2011), effective integration involves developing a strong employer brand that aligns with the institution's strategic vision. Institutions can achieve this by establishing clear communication channels between HR and branding teams, conducting regular alignment assessments, and employing feedback mechanisms to continually refine HR practices (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Additionally, leveraging data-driven approaches to monitor and measure the impact of SHRM practices on internal branding can provide valuable insights for ongoing improvements (Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015).

6.2. Practical Applications

Practical Steps for Implementing SHRM Practices to Strengthen Internal Branding

To implement SHRM practices effectively and strengthen internal branding, institutions should begin by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps and opportunities in current HR practices (Huselid, 1995). Practical steps include developing targeted recruitment strategies that attract candidates aligned with the institution's brand values, designing tailored training programs that reinforce brand messaging, and establishing recognition and reward systems that celebrate brand-aligned behaviors and achievements. Institutions should also ensure that all HR communications and practices are consistent with the brand identity to create a unified message across all touchpoints (Collins & Smith, 2006).

Tools and Resources for Higher Education Institutions

Institutions can utilize various tools and resources to support the implementation of SHRM practices. For example, HR management software and analytics platforms can aid in tracking employee performance, engagement, and alignment with branding goals (Brewster et al., 2016). Additionally, professional development resources such as workshops and conferences on HR and branding can provide valuable insights and best practices (Cooke, 2015). Institutions should also consider leveraging external consultancy services specializing in SHRM and branding to gain expert guidance and tailored solutions for their specific needs (Torrington et al., 2014). By adopting these tools and resources, higher education institutions can enhance their SHRM practices and reinforce their internal branding efforts effectively.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study has explored the intersection of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and internal branding within higher education institutions. It was found that effective SHRM practices, including comprehensive talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies, significantly contribute to strengthening internal branding efforts. Specifically, institutions that align their HR practices with strategic branding objectives are better positioned to foster a strong internal brand identity and enhance employee engagement. The analysis revealed that key SHRM practices—such as targeted recruitment, tailored training programs, and consistent recognition systems—play a pivotal role in reinforcing the institution's brand values and culture. Furthermore, the study identified several challenges in integrating SHRM with internal branding, such as resistance to change and resource constraints, while also highlighting opportunities for improvement, including the use of data-driven insights and strategic alignment of HR practices with institutional goals.

7.2. Future Research Directions

Future research should investigate several areas to build on the findings of this study. First, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how the integration of SHRM and internal branding evolves over time and its long-term impact on institutional performance and employee satisfaction. Additionally, research exploring the effectiveness of specific SHRM practices in different types of higher education institutions (e.g., public vs. private, large vs. small) could offer more nuanced recommendations. Comparative studies across various geographical regions or educational systems might also reveal contextual differences in SHRM and branding practices. Moreover, examining the role of emerging technologies and digital tools in enhancing SHRM and internal branding could provide valuable perspectives on modernizing these practices. Finally, further qualitative research involving interviews with HR professionals and institutional leaders could enrich our understanding of the practical challenges and best practices in integrating SHRM with internal branding strategies.

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