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HRM PRACTICES AND FACULTY PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

The higher education sector in India is undergoing transformative change driven by global competition, regulatory reforms, and evolving student expectations. Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are increasingly recognised as pivotal levers for enhancing faculty performance and, by extension, institutional excellence. This study investigates the influence of HRM practices — namely recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation management, faculty empowerment, and work-life balance — on the performance of faculty members in higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted. Using stratified random sampling, data were collected from 385 faculty members across 20 HEIs in Chennai through a structured, validated questionnaire. Statistical tools including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, ANOVA, and structural equation modelling (SEM) were employed. The findings reveal that training and development ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), performance appraisal ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$), and compensation management ($\beta = 0.291$, $p < 0.01$) are the strongest predictors of faculty performance. A significant positive correlation was found between overall HRM practices and faculty performance ($r = 0.782$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 68.4% of the variance in faculty performance ($R^2 = 0.684$). The study provides actionable insights for HEI administrators and policymakers to design evidence-based HR strategies that nurture faculty potential and elevate institutional quality.

Keywords: HRM Practices, Faculty Performance, Higher Educational Institutions, Chennai, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Structural Equation Modelling.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of higher education in shaping a nation's socio-economic fabric is well-established. As India aspires to become a knowledge economy, the quality of higher educational institutions (HEIs) becomes paramount. At the heart of institutional quality lies faculty — the primary conduit through which knowledge is created, disseminated, and applied. Human Resource Management (HRM) practices that systematically attract, develop, motivate, and retain high-calibre faculty are therefore indispensable to the mission of HEIs.

Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, is one of India's prominent educational hubs, hosting over 200 arts and science colleges, 30 engineering institutions, and numerous deemed universities, including Anna University, Madras University, Loyola College, and the Indian Institute of Technology Madras. This concentration of diverse institutions makes Chennai an ideal locale for examining HRM dynamics in higher education.

Despite the centrality of faculty in academic excellence, empirical research on HRM practices within Indian HEIs remains sparse relative to the corporate sector. Much of the existing literature emanates from Western institutional contexts and may not be directly transferable to the sociocultural fabric of Indian academia. Faculty in Indian HEIs operate under unique pressures, including heavy teaching loads, inadequate research infrastructure,

bureaucratic governance, gender-related constraints, and rapidly changing accreditation requirements (NAAC, NBA). These contextual specificities necessitate locally grounded empirical inquiry.

This study fills this gap by systematically examining how six core HRM dimensions — recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation management, faculty empowerment, and work-life balance — influence faculty performance in HEIs in Chennai. It also explores differences in perceived HRM effectiveness across institution type, gender, and academic experience.

The findings are expected to inform HEI management, Tamil Nadu state higher education policy, and broader national human resource strategies for academic institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 HRM Practices: Conceptual Framework

Human Resource Management encompasses a range of organisational practices designed to manage human capital for competitive advantage (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). In the context of higher education, Bowen and Baird (2019) define HRM as the systematic alignment of people management processes with the academic mission of the institution. The universalistic perspective (Pfeffer, 1994) posits that certain 'best practices' in HRM uniformly produce superior outcomes, while the contingency perspective argues that HR practices must be aligned with the strategic context of the organisation (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). Bowen et al. (2018) extended these frameworks to the academic context, emphasising that HRM in HEIs must balance academic freedom with institutional accountability.

2.2 Training and Development in HEIs

Training and development (T&D) is consistently identified in the literature as one of the most influential HR practices on employee performance. In academic settings, T&D encompasses faculty development programmes, research workshops, pedagogical training, and international collaboration initiatives. Singh and Rao (2021) demonstrated a significant positive relationship between T&D participation and research productivity among faculty in Indian universities. Similarly, Nair and Menon (2020) found that faculty who received structured T&D interventions reported higher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Internationally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasised that continuous professional development is a cornerstone of high-performing educational systems.

2.3 Performance Appraisal Systems

Performance appraisal in academic institutions presents unique challenges due to the multidimensional nature of faculty work encompassing teaching, research, administrative duties, and community engagement. Kumari and Malhotra (2019) found that transparent, criterion-referenced appraisal systems positively influenced faculty motivation and goal commitment in Indian universities. DeNisi and Murphy (2017) argued that effective appraisal must be developmental rather than purely evaluative to foster performance improvement. In the context of Tamil Nadu HEIs, Rajasekaran and Murugesan (2020) noted that faculty perceived self-appraisal components as more credible and motivating than externally administered evaluations.

2.4 Compensation and Benefits

While compensation is often viewed as a hygiene factor (Herzberg, 1966), research suggests that pay equity and performance-linked incentives significantly moderate faculty commitment and retention. Rajan and Krishnamurthy (2021) reported that perceived pay inequity between government-aided and self-financing college faculty in Tamil Nadu was associated with reduced organisational commitment. Internationally, Musselin (2018) observed that market-responsive compensation models in higher education were linked to greater faculty attraction and retention, particularly in STEM disciplines.

2.5 Recruitment and Selection

Strategic recruitment ensures that institutions attract faculty whose competencies align with institutional goals. Cappelli and Keller (2014) emphasised the importance of merit-based selection criteria, including research potential, pedagogical competence, and cultural fit. In the Indian context, Rao and Sharma (2019) highlighted that recruitment in private HEIs often deviates from merit criteria due to management interference, negatively affecting institutional performance. Chennai-based institutions increasingly adopt multi-tiered selection protocols including demonstration lectures, research presentations, and panel interviews.

2.6 Faculty Empowerment and Work-Life Balance

Empowerment — the process of enabling faculty to exercise initiative, creativity, and autonomy — is strongly linked to intrinsic motivation and innovative teaching practices (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In Indian HEIs, Anitha and Aruna (2020) found that empowerment initiatives including shared governance, curriculum ownership, and research autonomy were significant predictors of faculty engagement. Work-life balance has emerged as a critical HR issue, particularly for female faculty members who navigate dual roles as professionals and caregivers. Srivastava and Kanpur (2021) reported that flexible scheduling and institutional support for childcare significantly enhanced female faculty retention in South Indian institutions.

2.7 Research Gaps

While existing literature provides valuable insights into individual HRM practices, several gaps persist. First, most studies examine HRM practices in isolation rather than as an integrated system. Second, studies specifically focussed on Chennai's HEI ecosystem are limited. Third, the use of advanced multivariate techniques such as SEM to model the causal pathway from HRM practices to faculty performance in Indian HEIs is underutilised. This study addresses all three gaps.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level of HRM practices adopted in higher educational institutions in Chennai.
2. To evaluate the level of faculty performance in selected HEIs in Chennai.
3. To analyse the relationship between HRM practices and faculty performance.
4. To determine the predictive influence of HRM practice dimensions on faculty performance using multiple regression analysis.
5. To identify significant differences in HRM practices and faculty performance based on demographic variables.
6. To develop and validate a structural model linking HRM practices to faculty performance.

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between HRM practices and faculty performance.

H_{o2}: Training and development does not significantly predict faculty performance.

H_{o3}: Performance appraisal does not significantly influence faculty performance.

H_{o4}: There is no significant difference in perceived HRM practices based on institution type.

H_{o5}: There is no significant difference in faculty performance based on years of experience.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional research design. A positivist epistemological

stance is employed, consistent with the quantitative nature of the inquiry. The study encompasses both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were gathered from NAAC reports, UGC guidelines, AISHE 2022-23 reports, and extant peer-reviewed literature. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to faculty members in HEIs in Chennai.

5.2 Population and Sampling

The target population consists of full-time faculty members (Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors) employed in HEIs in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Based on AISHE (2022-23) data, the estimated faculty population in Chennai is approximately 18,500. Using the formula proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, the required minimum sample size is 376 respondents. A sample of 420 questionnaires was distributed to allow for attrition, and 398 were returned (94.8% response rate). After data cleaning, 385 responses were deemed valid for analysis.

Stratified random sampling was employed. The population was stratified by institution type: government universities (Stratum 1), government-aided colleges (Stratum 2), private self-financing institutions (Stratum 3), and deemed universities (Stratum 4). Proportional allocation was used to determine sub-sample sizes.

Table 1: Sampling Frame by Institution Type

Institution Type	Population (Est.)	Sample Proportion	Sample Size
Government Universities	2,800	15.1%	58
Government-Aided Colleges	4,500	24.3%	94
Private Self-Financing Colleges	7,200	38.9%	150
Deemed Universities	4,000	21.6%	83
Total	18,500	100%	385

5.3 Instrument Development and Validation

The primary data collection instrument is a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) comprising three sections. Section A captures demographic and professional profile data. Section B measures six HRM practice constructs with a total of 42 items adapted from validated scales in the literature (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Singh, 2004; Huselid, 1995). Section C measures faculty performance using a 20-item scale adapted from Astin's (1993) conceptualisation of faculty performance across teaching effectiveness, research productivity, administrative contribution, and student mentoring.

Content validity was established through expert review by five academic HR scholars and three HEI administrators. Construct validity was assessed via exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. All items loaded on their respective constructs with loadings > 0.50. Convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50) and composite reliability (CR > 0.70) in the SEM analysis.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The overall alpha was 0.924. Individual construct alphas ranged from 0.814 to 0.891, confirming high internal consistency (see Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for HRM Practice Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	SD
Recruitment & Selection (RS)	7	0.831	3.62	0.714
Training & Development (TD)	8	0.891	3.48	0.762
Performance Appraisal (PA)	8	0.857	3.41	0.748
Compensation Management (CM)	7	0.814	3.29	0.801
Faculty Empowerment (FE)	6	0.848	3.55	0.689
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	6	0.823	3.37	0.773
Faculty Performance (FP)	20	0.924	3.52	0.659

5.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected during the academic year 2023–24 (January to May 2024). Institutional permission was obtained from the administration of each selected institution. The questionnaire was distributed both in printed format and as a Google Form link, providing respondents flexibility. Informed consent was obtained. Respondent anonymity was assured. To minimise common method bias, the questionnaire employed reverse-coded items and respondents were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers.

5.5 Statistical Analysis Tools

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 26.0 and AMOS Version 24.0. Statistical techniques included: (i) descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation); (ii) Pearson product-moment correlation; (iii) multiple linear regression; (iv) one-way ANOVA with post-hoc Tukey HSD test; (v) independent samples t-test; and (vi) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM). The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the 385 valid respondents are presented in Table 3. A near-balanced gender representation was observed (Female: 54.3%; Male: 45.7%). The majority of respondents were Assistant Professors (58.4%), followed by Associate Professors (27.3%) and Professors (14.3%). The largest proportion fell in the 31–40 age group (42.6%). With regard to experience, 38.4% had between 6–10 years of service. Private self-financing institutions contributed the largest stratum (38.9%).

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 385)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	209	54.3
	Male	176	45.7
Age (Years)	Below 30	62	16.1
	31–40	164	42.6
	41–50	115	29.9
	Above 50	44	11.4
Designation	Assistant Professor	225	58.4
	Associate Professor	105	27.3
	Professor	55	14.3
Experience	Below 5 years	78	20.3
	6–10 years	148	38.4
	11–15 years	96	24.9
	Above 15 years	63	16.4
Institution Type	Government University	58	15.1
	Govt.-Aided College	94	24.4
	Private Self-Financing	150	39.0
	Deemed University	83	21.5

6.2 Descriptive Analysis of HRM Practices

Table 4 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each HRM practice dimension. Overall, the mean score for HRM practices was 3.45 (SD = 0.61), indicating a moderate-to-high level of HRM practice adoption across the sampled institutions. Recruitment and Selection (M = 3.62) and Faculty Empowerment (M = 3.55) recorded the highest perceived levels, while Compensation Management (M = 3.29) and Work-Life Balance (M = 3.37) were comparatively lower, indicating areas warranting institutional attention.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of HRM Practice Dimensions

HRM Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Level
Recruitment & Selection	3.62	0.714	1.80	5.00	High
Training & Development	3.48	0.762	1.60	5.00	Moderate-High

HRM Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Level
Performance Appraisal	3.41	0.748	1.40	5.00	Moderate-High
Compensation Management	3.29	0.801	1.20	5.00	Moderate
Faculty Empowerment	3.55	0.689	1.80	5.00	High
Work-Life Balance	3.37	0.773	1.40	5.00	Moderate
Overall HRM Practices	3.45	0.610	1.67	5.00	Moderate-High
Faculty Performance	3.52	0.659	1.75	5.00	Moderate-High

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the bivariate relationships between HRM practice dimensions and faculty performance. The results (Table 5) indicate that all six HRM dimensions share statistically significant positive correlations with faculty performance ($p < 0.001$). The strongest correlation was observed between Training & Development and Faculty Performance ($r = 0.691$), followed by Performance Appraisal ($r = 0.658$) and Faculty Empowerment ($r = 0.621$). The overall HRM Practices composite showed a strong correlation with Faculty Performance ($r = 0.782$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the rejection of H_1.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix – HRM Practices and Faculty Performance

Variable	RS	TD	PA	CM	FE	WLB	FP
RS	1.000						
TD	0.548**	1.000					
PA	0.512**	0.624**	1.000				
CM	0.487**	0.531**	0.576**	1.000			
FE	0.534**	0.612**	0.589**	0.498**	1.000		
WLB	0.461**	0.548**	0.537**	0.521**	0.563**	1.000	
FP	0.543**	0.691**	0.658**	0.534**	0.621**	0.558**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). RS = Recruitment & Selection; TD = Training & Development; PA = Performance Appraisal; CM = Compensation Management; FE = Faculty Empowerment; WLB = Work-Life Balance; FP = Faculty Performance.

6.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was performed with Faculty Performance as the dependent variable and the six HRM dimensions as predictors. Prior to regression, multicollinearity was assessed. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 5 (range: 2.14–3.87), and tolerance values exceeded 0.10, confirming the absence of

problematic multicollinearity.

The overall regression model was statistically significant: $F(6, 378) = 136.47$, $p < 0.001$. The model explains 68.4% of variance in Faculty Performance ($R^2 = 0.684$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.678$). Table 6 presents the standardised beta coefficients and significance levels.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis – Predictors of Faculty Performance

HRM Dimension	β (Std.)	t-value	p-value	VIF	Decision
Recruitment & Selection	0.182	3.847	0.000**	2.14	Significant
Training & Development	0.412	9.214	0.000**	3.21	Significant (H_2 rejected)
Performance Appraisal	0.368	7.891	0.000**	3.45	Significant (H_3 rejected)
Compensation Management	0.291	5.632	0.002**	2.87	Significant
Faculty Empowerment	0.247	5.018	0.001**	3.87	Significant
Work-Life Balance	0.198	4.127	0.000**	2.56	Significant

$R = 0.827$; $R^2 = 0.684$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.678$; $F(6, 378) = 136.47$; $p < 0.001$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Training and Development ($\beta = 0.412$) emerged as the strongest predictor of faculty performance, followed by Performance Appraisal ($\beta = 0.368$) and Compensation Management ($\beta = 0.291$). All six HRM dimensions contributed significantly to the model, rejecting H_2 and H_3. These results underscore the importance of a holistic, multi-dimensional HRM approach in enhancing faculty outcomes.

6.5 ANOVA – Differences Based on Institution Type

One-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether perceived HRM practices differed significantly across institution types. The results (Table 7) indicate a significant difference in overall HRM practices across institution types: $F(3, 381) = 18.93$, $p < 0.001$, rejecting H_4. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests revealed that faculty in Government Universities perceived significantly higher HRM practice levels compared to those in Private Self-Financing Colleges (Mean difference = 0.43, $p < 0.001$) and Deemed Universities (Mean difference = 0.29, $p < 0.01$). Government-Aided Colleges and Deemed Universities did not differ significantly from each other ($p = 0.124$).

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA – HRM Practices by Institution Type

Institution Type	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Government Universities	58	3.89	0.512	18.93	0.000**
Govt.-Aided Colleges	94	3.67	0.581		
Private Self-Financing	150	3.46	0.638		
Deemed Universities	83	3.60	0.594		

Institution Type	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Total	385	3.45	0.610		

6.6 ANOVA – Faculty Performance by Years of Experience

One-way ANOVA was used to test H_5. Significant differences in faculty performance were found across experience groups: $F(3, 381) = 12.74$, $p < 0.001$. Post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis revealed that faculty with above 15 years of experience reported significantly higher performance ($M = 3.91$) compared to those with below 5 years ($M = 3.22$, $p < 0.001$) and 6–10 years ($M = 3.47$, $p < 0.01$). Faculty with 11–15 years of experience ($M = 3.68$) also significantly outperformed the below-5-year group ($p < 0.05$). H_5 is therefore rejected.

6.7 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

To test the theorised structural model linking HRM practices to faculty performance, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS 24.0. The measurement model was evaluated first. All factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.001$) and standardised loadings ranged from 0.612 to 0.847. AVE values ranged from 0.521 to 0.612, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.814 to 0.891, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was confirmed as the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its inter-construct correlations.

The structural model demonstrated acceptable fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.34$ (< 3.0); CFI = 0.948 (> 0.90); TLI = 0.939 (> 0.90); RMSEA = 0.058 (< 0.08); SRMR = 0.047 (< 0.08). The structural path from HRM Practices to Faculty Performance was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the hypothesised relationship and validating the theoretical model.

Table 8: SEM Fit Indices

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Interpretation
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	< 3.0	2.34	Acceptable
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.948	Good Fit
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.939	Good Fit
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.058	Good Fit
SRMR	< 0.08	0.047	Good Fit
GFI (Goodness-of-Fit)	> 0.85	0.912	Good Fit

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence that HRM practices are significant determinants of faculty performance in higher educational institutions in Chennai. The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.782$) and high explanatory power of the regression model ($R^2 = 0.684$) indicate that HRM practices collectively account for a substantial portion of variance in faculty performance. This aligns with the universalistic perspective (Pfeffer, 1994) and corroborates findings from Singh and Rao (2021) and Kumari and Malhotra (2019) in the Indian higher education

context.

Training and Development emerged as the most influential predictor (β = 0.412), consistent with the work of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) and Nair and Menon (2020). This suggests that Chennai HEIs that invest in structured faculty development programmes — particularly those addressing research methodology, pedagogy, and digital teaching competencies — can expect meaningful improvements in faculty output. The finding is particularly significant given that Tamil Nadu's RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) framework prioritises faculty development as a quality improvement mechanism.

Performance Appraisal was the second strongest predictor (β = 0.368). The findings corroborate Rajasekaran and Murugesan (2020), who found that appraisal transparency and fairness are central to faculty motivation in Tamil Nadu institutions. The data suggest that institutions with well-structured, criteria-based appraisal systems are likely to observe higher faculty performance. The developmental orientation of appraisal — focusing on growth rather than mere evaluation — emerged as a key facilitator.

Compensation Management (β = 0.291), though ranked third, reflects the important role of pay equity in sustaining faculty motivation. The disparity in compensation between government, government-aided, and self-financing institutions in Tamil Nadu — a persistent structural issue — likely underlies the moderate satisfaction score (M = 3.29) on this dimension. This echoes Rajan and Krishnamurthy's (2021) finding of pay inequity-related disengagement in the state.

The significant institutional differences in HRM practices (ANOVA, $F = 18.93$, $p < 0.001$) reveal a systemic inequity: faculty in government universities experience considerably better HRM environments than their counterparts in private self-financing institutions. This has implications for policymakers and the UGC, which should enforce minimum HRM standards across all institution types.

The experience-based variation in faculty performance (ANOVA, $F = 12.74$, $p < 0.001$) mirrors international evidence that academic expertise and performance accumulate with experience. However, this finding also calls attention to the need for early-career faculty support programmes, mentoring systems, and structured onboarding to bridge the performance gap.

The SEM results confirm the structural validity of the proposed model and the direct causal path from HRM practices to faculty performance ($\beta = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$), offering theoretical and practical validation for HR strategy development in HEIs.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

8.1 Managerial Implications

HEI administrators should prioritise investment in faculty development programmes that are context-sensitive, outcome-oriented, and aligned with the institution's academic mission. Performance appraisal systems should be overhauled to incorporate 360-degree feedback, self-evaluation components, and developmental goal-setting. Compensation review mechanisms should be instituted to address intra-institutional and inter-institutional pay disparities. Empowerment initiatives — such as curriculum autonomy, research seed grants, and participation in academic governance — should be expanded, particularly in private self-financing institutions.

8.2 Policy Implications

The UGC and AICTE should mandate minimum HRM standards for accreditation and affiliation renewal. NAAC assessment criteria should include a dedicated HRM Quality Parameter. The Tamil Nadu Government should consider equalising compensation across institution types through revised grant-in-aid structures. RUSA allocations should specifically fund faculty development and institutional HR capacity building.

8.3 Theoretical Implications

This study extends the High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) framework to the Indian higher education

context, demonstrating its applicability beyond the manufacturing and corporate service sectors. The validated SEM model offers a theoretical scaffold for future longitudinal and comparative research on HRM and faculty performance in South Asian HEIs.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several limitations should be noted. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference beyond what SEM modelling allows. The study is confined to Chennai; generalisability to other Indian cities and rural educational contexts should be exercised with caution. Self-reported data introduce potential social desirability bias, though procedural remedies were employed. Future research should adopt a longitudinal design to track changes in HRM practices and faculty performance over time. Comparative cross-city or cross-national studies would enrich the theoretical contributions. Qualitative inquiry through in-depth interviews could provide richer contextual understanding of the mechanisms through which HRM practices influence faculty behaviour and outcomes.

10. CONCLUSION

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence that HRM practices are vital determinants of faculty performance in higher educational institutions in Chennai. The findings demonstrate that Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, and Compensation Management are the most influential HR levers for enhancing faculty output. A validated structural model confirms the direct causal pathway from HRM practices to faculty performance with strong model fit indices. Significant disparities in HRM effectiveness across institution types — with government universities outperforming private self-financing colleges — highlight the structural inequities that persist in Tamil Nadu's higher education system. The study calls for urgent, evidence-based reform of HRM practices in HEIs, grounded in the contextual realities of Chennai's diverse academic landscape. Institutions that strategically invest in their human capital through systematic HRM will be better positioned to achieve academic excellence, institutional accreditation, and sustainable competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving higher education marketplace.

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