

# Linking Strategic Leadership to Faculty Performance: A Sequential Mediated Model of Organizational and Employee Agility

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**Abstract:** In Pakistan's Higher Education Sector, strategic leadership has become a key driver in enhancing employee performance by establishing a clear vision, promoting agility at individual and organizational levels. While existing empirical studies have primarily focused on the impact of strategic leadership on organizational performance, however very little attention has been given to its direct impact on employee outcomes, particularly within Pakistan's higher education institutions (HEIs). This research aims to address this gap and offer practical insights for strategic leadership in the context of academic settings. The study explores the association between strategic leadership of top management with employee performance, focusing on permanent faculty members, as well as the sequential mediating roles of organizational agility and faculty agility in the HEI context. Data is collected through a structured questionnaire from 338 faculty members across public and private HEIs in all provinces and federal areas of Pakistan. The data is analyzed using SPSS and MEDTHREE analysis for hypotheses. The results show that strategic leadership positively impacts faculty performance. Furthermore, both organizational and faculty agility sequentially influence this relationship, and it was concluded that agility at both levels is an important strategy for translating strategic leadership into higher faculty performance. These findings emphasize the significance of creating agile cultures inside higher education institutions to realize the benefits of strategic leadership fully.

**Keywords:** Strategic leadership, employee performance, organizational agility, employee agility, Higher Education

**JEL Classification Codes:**

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership plays a critical role in influencing and motivating individuals and organizations toward the achievement of shared goals (Robiah, 2024). In today's rapidly evolving global environment, impactful leadership is essential for navigating complex challenges and enabling organizations to respond to economic, political, and technological shifts. In the context of the Higher Education Sector, visionary and knowledgeable leaders are indispensable for addressing real-world problems with practical and strategic solutions (Maduforo, 2024). The pivotal choice made by the Leadership significantly influences employee performance (Donkor, 2021), and effective leadership cultivates a dynamic and innovative organizational culture that improves overall employee output (Buttigieg et al., 2023). The overall performance of the organization is enhanced when there is a strong connection between top management and employees in executing their professional responsibilities. Leaders are capable of articulating company objectives to their team members and guiding them towards achieving these goals. An organization necessitates influential leaders who can effectively shape individuals' behaviors (Suprayitno,

2024). More precisely, the performance of faculty is essential within the higher education framework, as it directly affects student learning outcomes and, consequently, the quality of graduates (Rafi, 2021).

As higher education operates within the service sector, the challenges encountered by service sector employees similarly impact the performance of individuals within the higher education system. The pandemic has shifted perceptions regarding the societal role of higher education (Howe et al., 2021), highlighting the importance of effective leadership in managing crises, along with the imperative for institutions to foster agility, adaptability, and creativity to thrive during uncertain times (Nuevo, 2021). Numerous studies indicate that the future sustainability of organizations, particularly higher education institutions (HEIs), is significantly reliant on strategic leaders who possess the ability to anticipate long-term goals, promote institutional improvements, and foster a culture of innovation and adaptability (Spanjol, 2023; Akkaya, 2020; Karim, 2024). Strategic leaders have been proven to significantly improve employee performance by creating a supportive and empowering environment (Baig, 2020; Fios, 2024). In this situation, organizations must constantly adapt to internal and external change forces to remain viable. Both the public and private sectors are actively working to retain adaptability in the face of continual operational changes. As a result, organizational agility has become a critical strategic priority. The emergence of hybrid and flexible work patterns has further changed leadership expectations, notably in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Agile systems generate agile employees (Parhyar, 2023). An agile institution empowers employees to think differently, act as change agents, and contribute meaningfully to institutional performance. Such institutions emphasize capacity building, innovation, research, and a culture of lifelong learning (Narenji, 2022).

Nevertheless, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan face numerous challenges that hinder their flexibility. Establishing agile systems requires a dynamic, responsive, and cooperative methodology for teaching, administration, and governance. Employees in such systems are better suited to deliver, adapt to changing circumstances, and drive organizational success (Holbeche, 2023). To stay competitive, institutions must balance agility with structural flexibility, promote decentralized decision-making, and encourage cross-functional collaboration (Renzi, 2021). Since employee performance is directly linked to organizational success, it remains a central focus for institutions across all sectors (Gede, 2024). This also holds for HEIs, where employee engagement, empowerment, and satisfaction are key contributors to institutional effectiveness (Abbas, 2022; Jamali, 2022).

Despite the significance of these factors, limited research has explored the relationship between strategic leadership, agility, and employee performance within Pakistani HEIs (Sharif et al., 2024). Many institutions struggle to keep pace with emerging global trends due to complex operational environments that require both leadership vision and workforce adaptability (Hinduja, 2023). There is an urgent need to respond to technological improvements and changing educational expectations with strategic agility and strong leadership support. Without these, institutions risk failing to meet high academic standards and long-term sustainability (Rehman, 2024).

## **1.1. Contextual view**

Pakistan's higher education universities (HEIs) have made considerable progress over time (Manzoor, 2023) and have reached the figure of 263. The establishment of new institutions has dramatically reshaped the higher education landscape, reflecting the sector's growth and evolution (Nawaz et al., 2024). As an important part of Pakistan's expanding service industry, HEIs have the potential to significantly contribute to the country's development, economic prosperity, and social stability. Strategic leadership within local higher education institutions can have a significant impact on staff performance by creating an organizational culture and driving institutional processes (Ho, 2023; Khan, 2023). Considering the challenges faced by employees in educational environments, strategic leaders can craft and implement comprehensive strategies aligned with institutional goals. These strategies are extremely important for handling performance-related concerns while remaining responsive to major shifts in the educational landscape, such as technological improvements and policy reforms (Maduforo et al., 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed major shifts in higher education globally, emphasizing the need for agile leadership, adaptive environments, and flexible workforces to support digital transformation (Kuzmenko et al., 2023; Ludviga, 2024). Pakistani HEIs faced similar disruptions, underscoring the importance of strategic leadership in enhancing employee performance during times of crisis (Ahmad, 2024). The pandemic endorsed the necessity of organizational and employee agility, along with leadership that empowers and enables institutional resilience (Ludviga, 2024). The capacity of HEI administrators to lead through such challenges while supporting their employees has had a direct impact on performance outcomes.

Universities in Pakistan have implemented several reforms to increase the accessibility, quality, flexibility, digital culture, and relevance of higher education (Ullah, 2023). Additionally, new universities are being established, focusing on good governance and quality assurance, cultivating an innovative climate to promote innovation, agility, and creativity to improve performance, expanding research infrastructure, and implementing regulations that promote educational justice and inclusivity (Hinduja, 2023). The external factors that influence Pakistan's higher education system, including global trends, technical developments, and international collaborations, have made teaching and learning methods more challenging, affecting employees' performance (Phulpoto, 2024). Performance is the only phenomenon directly linked to institutional failure and success (John, 2024), and the institutions that can achieve positive outcomes from their employees are considered the most successful (Alsafadi, 2021).

Although HEC has implemented new policies and initiatives for advancement, a significant number of educational institutions in Pakistan remain hindered in terms of organizational agility and performance by their entrenched and bureaucratic structures (Shehzadi, 2021). Another study by Hinduja (2023) affirms that while Pakistan's higher education system can evolve and meet emerging demands, it is often constrained by inflexible leadership and outdated administrative frameworks. As a key component of Pakistan's growing service economy, HEIs have the potential to significantly contribute to the country's development, economic prosperity, and social stability. Strategic leadership at local higher education institutions can significantly improve staff performance by establishing organizational culture and driving institutional processes (Nadeem, 2023). Despite the critical nature of these factors, there is a scarcity of research that has examined the link between strategic leadership, agility, and employee performance in Pakistani higher education institutions (Sharif et al., 2024). There is a pressing necessity to adapt to technological advancements, agile systems at the individual and organizational level, and evolving educational expectations through strategic leadership support. Without these elements, institutions risk failing to maintain high academic standards and long-term viability (Rehman, 2024).

The current body of research in the local context has analyzed strategic leadership and individual performance independently (Aghina, 2020), while placing insufficient attention on how strategic leadership directly affects and elevates employee performance (Samimi, 2022). In the context of Pakistan, the influence of strategic leadership on improving employee performance in higher education institutions is still not thoroughly investigated (Farooq, 2023). Consequently, this research seeks to analyze the effects of strategic leadership on employee performance, while also considering the sequential mediation of organizational agility and employee agility. (Farooq, 2023). Consequently, this research seeks to analyze the effects of strategic leadership on employee performance, while also considering the sequential mediation of organizational agility and employee agility.

## **2. Literature Review**

The concept of leadership has ancient origins; numerous experts have thoroughly researched it over the years across civilizations (Dugan, 2024). It is one of the most multidimensional and complex phenomena (Zander, 2024). Because of its complexities, the leadership notion is always evolving and heavily disputed. It is the most researched and least understood issue, with no single originator, but has evolved over centuries through philosophical, historical, and social investigations (Bennis, 2009). Multifaceted issues in Pakistani higher education institutions have necessitated a paradigm shift, driven by growing

expectations and the dynamic interplay of technological and cultural transformations. In the current scenario, strategic leaders have the potential to play an active role in meeting the requirements of today's society, especially in the context of Pakistan's universities. They can adeptly respond to new challenges while seizing current opportunities for development, advancement, and relevance, which are crucial for significantly boosting global competitiveness. (Alzghoul et al., 2023). The study by Altman (2020) emphasized that strategic leaders in academia can demonstrate foresight, adaptability, and a commitment to fostering collaborative cultures. Institutions that supported their faculty through flexible work arrangements and emotional well-being initiatives demonstrated resilience and maintained high levels of performance. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges to higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide, necessitating adaptable and proactive leadership to overcome disruptions. Leaders were tasked with expediting the transition from traditional to online learning models, ensuring digital inclusion, and maintaining academic achievement amid global instability. Strategic leadership has become vital in crisis management, developing resilience and driving creativity to adapt to changing circumstances (Crawford et al., 2020). During the pandemic crisis, it was demonstrated that educational institutions led by proactive, visionary, and adaptive leadership were able to quickly transition to online learning platforms (Zia, 2023).

Pakistan's higher education institutions come across several problems that hinder their adaptability. Developing an agile institution in Pakistan's higher education sector necessitates an adaptable, flexible, and collaborative approach to teaching, learning, and organizational management. The benefits of adaptability become especially clear when considering its impact on employees' performance. Agile approaches, for example, allow organisations to respond to changes more quickly, stimulate innovation, and increase faculty involvement and effectiveness (Manzoor, 2023).

Faculty performance in Pakistan's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is an important research topic since it directly influences educational quality and institutional effectiveness. In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on improving the performance of academic and non-academic workers to ensure improved outcomes in teaching, research, and student services (Rasheed, 2016). Natsir & Ramli (2024) argued that when the leadership is fair and visionary, policies governing institutions are transparent, and employees will show higher performance to achieve institutional tasks more effectively. Although interest in employee performance has grown, there is still a distinct lack of empirical research that focuses explicitly on the factors impacting employee performance in higher education settings. Most of the extant research focuses on business or industrial sectors, leaving out the structural, cultural, and operational characteristics that distinguish academic institutions. Higher education environments involve unique obstacles and performance drives, such as academic governance systems, research and teaching demands, resource restrictions, and various stakeholder expectations. Addressing this gap is critical for developing evidence-based methods to improve staff productivity, engagement, and overall institutional success in higher education (Tashliyev, 2023).

## **2.1.Hypotheses Development**

Strategic leadership creates a culture that values learning, adaptation, and response to external complexity, allowing for continual and purposeful organizational evolution.

Strategic leadership is crucial to increasing organizational agility by cultivating a proactive culture, supporting innovation, and enabling quick decision-making in reaction to environmental changes. Leaders who use strategic approaches are better able to foresee market developments, efficiently allocate resources, and implement adaptive plans that maintain the organization's competitiveness and resilience (Nguyen, 2022). Furthermore, the study elaborates that strategic leadership is positively correlated with an organization's ability to recognize and respond to change, enhancing overall agility. It promotes constant learning, open communication, and a common vision, all of which are critical for maintaining agility in dynamic corporate contexts (Manzoor, 2023).

Strategic leadership is critical for success in today's complicated and fast-paced business climate. It plays an important role in creating organizational agility, the ability to react quickly, grasp opportunities, and overcome obstacles (Jaleha et al., 2018). Strategic leadership and organizational agility are intricately linked. The Carter (2023) study found that strategic leadership improves an organization's creative thinking and adaptability. Strategic leaders contribute to the development of agile organizations that can effectively respond to change and complexity by cultivating a forward-thinking and flexible environment. Finally, the study identifies strategic leadership as a catalyst for developing agile organizations capable of navigating complexity and ambiguity. It's characteristic of Strategic leadership that focuses on creating an agile environment, building agile teams, and aligning organizational procedures with changing demands, all of which are necessary for long-term competitiveness (Rashid,2023). Strategic leaders are defined not only by the ability to learn new knowledge and ideas but also by the adaptive capacity to respond correctly to the dynamism and complexity of the external environment (Krupp,2019). In short, strategic leaders possess the ability to cultivate agile teams, foster innovation, and synchronize organizational functions with evolving demands, all of which are essential for sustained competitiveness and positively influence organizational agility (Aghina,2021; Kumkale,2022).

***H1: Strategic leadership has a significant positive impact on organizational agility.***

Both terms, organizational agility and employee agility, are inseparable. Organizational agility refers to an institution's total ability to adapt, innovate, and respond to internal and external issues (Ciampi et al., 2022). In contrast, employee agility demonstrates the ability of individuals and teams to embrace change, develop new skills, and remain adaptable in their positions (Mücelandili et al., 2020). It is the quality of an agile organization to empower employees and to cultivate an environment that promotes adaptability, thereby enhancing performance and reinforcing overall institutional agility. A highly agile employee can drive and maintain organizational adaptability (Rasheed, 2024). Many researchers have emphasized that agility within organizations creates a supportive and flexible environment that fosters innovation and strengthens employee agility (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020; Jonathan, 2024). Leaders increasingly view workforce agility as a strategic asset that drives innovation and competitiveness (Chong, 2024). Strategic leaders play an important role in this process by developing agile teams, fostering innovation, and aligning operations with changing demands (Aghina, 2021). They also enable swift decision-making and effective resource allocation, which are critical components of organizational agility and long-term success. To flourish in a constantly changing environment, organizations and workers must cultivate the flexibility to embrace change, exchange information, and respond to unanticipated problems (Franco & Landini, 2021). Flexible organizational structures and collaborative workplaces promote employee agility by facilitating rapid information flow, open communication, and cross-functional interaction. When hierarchies are reduced and teams are empowered, employees may respond more rapidly to changes, make educated decisions, and adjust their responsibilities as needed. Such systems promote openness, decrease bureaucratic delays, and build a sense of collective responsibility. Individuals in a collaborative environment are more likely to discuss ideas, share expertise, and assist one another, which improves collective problem-solving and innovation. Finally, this synergy promotes increased agility at both the individual and organizational levels. (Rasheed, 2024; Alavi, 2014; Eshlaghy, 2010; Vinodh & Prasanna, 2011).

***H2: Organizational agility has a significant positive impact on employees' agility.***

Employee agility improves performance by developing a workforce that is adaptable, proactive, and innovative. An agile workforce is better equipped to respond to changing demands, quickly acquire new skills, and contribute creative ideas, resulting in increased efficiency and effectiveness (Tessarini et al., 2021). A supportive work environment that fosters creativity improves employee performance and organizational success. Luo et al. (2022) reported that highly adaptable personnel flourish in dynamic workplaces because they can swiftly absorb new ideas and adjust to change. Similarly, Ardian et al. (2023) discovered that staff agility significantly increases both organizational and employee performance,

emphasizing that personnel who are adaptable, proactive, and fast to respond to change contribute more effectively to meeting organizational goals. According to the report, agile personnel are better able to manage uncertainty, accept new technology, and alter priorities as needed, resulting in increased efficiency, innovation, and production. Organisations that develop personal agility not only increase institutional resilience but also enable employees to perform at greater levels in complex and tough circumstances.

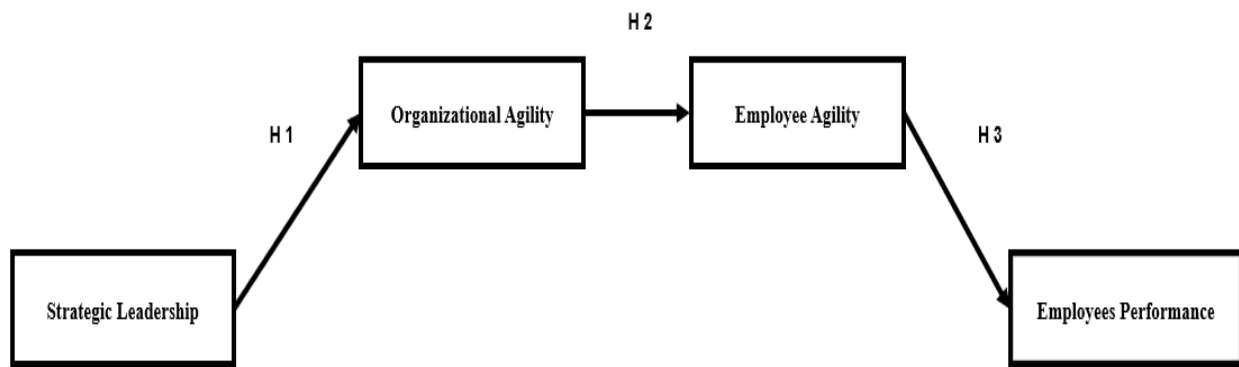
Agility enhances problem-solving, productivity, and resilience, all of which are essential in today's rapidly changing work environment (Müceldili et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the importance of an agile workforce capable of maintaining performance amid uncertainty. Agile employees can adapt quickly to changing conditions and use newly acquired abilities, allowing them to respond proactively to shifting organizational needs. This combination of adaptability and rapid skill application improves their capacity to manage uncertainty, solve complicated challenges, and seize emerging opportunities. As a result, such individuals contribute to increased efficiency, innovation, and problem-solving in the workplace, providing distinct performance advantages over less adaptable rivals. According to Heydarbeigi et al. (2021), employee agility not only improves immediate task performance but also promotes long-term organizational resilience and competitiveness in changing contexts. Similarly, another study by Chong (2023) has supported that organizations that foster agility among employees should expect enhanced productivity, greater flexibility, and improved ability to manage problems, eventually enhancing both employee and organizational performance.

***H3: Employees' agility has a significant positive impact on employees' performance.***

Strategic leadership promotes employee performance in organizational contexts both directly and indirectly via the dual paths of organizational agility and employee agility. Samimi (2022) and Panda (2022) have defined strategic leadership as the ability to instill a sense of purpose and direction in all stakeholders and beneficiaries, resulting in extraordinary performance. Agile organizations foster a culture of organizational and individual agility, resulting in a resilient environment that promotes adaptability and responsiveness (Jonathan et al., 2024). Strategic leadership has an important role in shaping organizational agility, which has a substantial impact on employee agility and performance. Effective strategic leaders create a vision and direction that supports a flexible culture, allowing organizations to respond rapidly to changing market conditions and emerging challenges. Strategic leadership and Organizational agility: employee performance. Agility-oriented leaders create frameworks that enhance resilience, encourage innovation, and improve individual performance (Teece et al., 2016; Aghina et al., 2020). Highly adaptable employees are more productive in dynamic environments due to their capacity to quickly learn, respond to change, and solve emerging challenges (Luo et al., 2022). Their ability to grasp opportunities and adapt to evolving roles makes them invaluable in fast-paced settings.

In essence, strategic leadership promotes the development of flexible organizational processes that foster employee flexibility, ultimately optimizing performance and contributing to the organization's long-term viability (Ogu, 2025)

***H4: Organizational agility and employees' agility sequentially mediate the relationship between Strategic leadership style and employees' performance***



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Framework

**Source:** The authors

**Note:** H 4 has not been shown in the figure to avoid clutter

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample and Data collection

The target population for this study comprises of faculty members from public and private universities in Pakistan, i.e., 263 in number, all accredited by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). According to the HEC database, the total number of faculty is 60,499, hence, the population is considered finite. This quantitative study used a cross-sectional design, with data collected via a survey-based questionnaire. 600 questionnaires were distributed, with 338 respondents (response rate = 56%).

The current research strategy and procedure are carefully implemented in multiple distinct phases to create clarity, uniformity, and methodological consistency. Initially, the target population (faculty members of higher education institutions) is identified. This stage, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), emphasizes the significance of matching the target population to the study problem. Following that, the proper sample size is chosen using statistical power analysis to provide adequate sensitivity in hypothesis testing, as suggested by Hair et al. (2020). The sample process is planned and stratified to ensure a representative distribution of faculty members. The data collection procedures are then finalized. A standardized, self-administered questionnaire has been created. This strategy was chosen because the data collection mechanisms are now finalized. A standardized, self-administered questionnaire is created and electronically distributed to the desired respondents. This strategy was selected for its effectiveness and capacity to reach a geographically dispersed audience (Saunders et al. 2003).

#### Measurement and Data Analysis

An adapted questionnaire has been used for all variables using a structured, survey-based questionnaire. Strategic Leadership (Jooste et al., 2009) has been used with seven items on a five-point Likert scale. Employee Agility (Alavi et al., 2014) with eleven items, while Organizational Agility (Zhang et al., 2022) has seven items on the same scale, and Employee Performance (Bekele et al., 2014) using ten items on a ten-point Likert scale.

To evaluate the study's hypotheses, the scales used to measure the variables must be validated and consistent internally. Cronbach's alphas were used to assess internal consistency between strategic leadership, organizational agility, employee agility, and employee performance.

Table 1 shows the factor loading results, as well as reliability and validity measurements for the study variables: strategic leadership, organizational agility, employee agility, and employee performance. The factor analysis results demonstrate that all items loaded strongly on their intended constructions, with loadings larger than 0.50, demonstrating item reliability. The constructions had good internal consistency,

as evidenced by Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability scores of more than 0.70. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than 0.50, indicating good convergent validity. Overall, these findings support the assessment model's reliability and validity in assessing strategic leadership, organizational agility, personnel agility, and performance in the context of this study.

**Table 1. Factor loadings, reliability, and validity**

	<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	<b>Organizational Agility</b>	<b>Employee Agility</b>	<b>Employee Performance</b>
1	0.78	0.77	0.69	0.68
2	0.64	0.69	0.57	0.81
3	0.67	0.73	0.78	0.80
4	0.68	0.83	0.79	0.78
5	0.71	0.62	0.80	0.62
6	0.76	0.64	0.61	0.70
7	0.73	0.78	0.62	0.75
8			0.84	0.72
9			0.93	0.92
10			0.89	0.49
11				0.78
<b>α</b>	0.88	0.79	0.84	0.90
<b>AVE</b>	0.51	0.53	0.58	0.55
<b>CR</b>	0.88	0.89	0.93	0.93

Source: The authors

AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR =Composite reliability, α Cronbach's Alpha

**Table 2. Sample Characteristics**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Age</b>		
20-30 Year	82	24.3
31-40 Years	72	21.3
41-50 years	96	28.4
51 or above	88	26
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	166	49.1
Female	172	50.9
<b>Education</b>		
Master	122	36.1
MPhil	112	33.1
PhD	104	30.8

Source: The authors

Note: N= 338

#### 4. Results and Findings

The overall sample characteristics, its descriptive statistics, the correlation between variables of the study, and direct and indirect hypotheses are mentioned in Tables 2 to 6 and discussed in detail.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>
Strategic Leadership	4.1289	.58875	-1.031	2.852
Organizational Agility	3.9231	.55922	-.730	1.188

Employee Agility	3.9051	.57051	-.850	1.854
Employee Performance	3.8577	.62624	-.693	1.236

Source: The authors

Note: N= 338, M=mean, SD=standard deviation, S= skewness, K=kurtosis

**Table 4. Correlations**

	1	2	3	4
1. Strategic Leadership	1			
2. Organizational Agility	.667**	1		
3. Employee Agility	.525**		1	
4. Employee Performance	.541**			1

Source: The authors

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5: Results of Direct Hypothesis**

**1. Model 1 (Outcome = Organizational Agility)**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
0.666	0.444	0.174	268.739	1	360	0

Variable	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLC	ULC

						I	I
						0	1
						.	.
Constant	1.308	0.161		8.124		0	9 6
						9	2
						1	5
						0	0
						.	.
Strategic Leadership	0.633	0.038		16.393		0	5 7
						5	0
						7	9

**Model 2 (Outcome = Employee Agility)**

						d	
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P	
							0
0.611	0.373	0.205	99.766	2			3 .
							3 0
							5 0
							0

Variable	Coeff	SE	T	P	L	U
					L	L
					C	C
					I	I
					0	1
					.	.
Constant	1.244	0.191		6.509		0 8 6
						6 2
						8 0
						0 0
						.
Strategic Leadership	0.238	0.056		4.239		0 1 3
						2 4
						7 0
						0 0
						.
Organizational Agility	0.427	0.059		7.217		0 3 5
						1 4
						0 3

**3. Model 3 (Outcome= Employee Performance)**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	d	P
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Variable	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
	0.6986	0.488	106.124	3	0.304	0.304
Constant	0.326	0.201	1.619	0.106	0.072	0.273
Strategic Leadership	0.171	0.057	2.993	0.003	0.058	0.284
Organizational Agility	0.296	0.063	4.690	0.000	0.172	0.420
Employee Performance	0.424	0.054	7.825	0.000	0.313	0.535

Notes: 1. Number of bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals: 1.000.  
2. Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.00

**Table 6. Mediation Analysis (Results of indirect hypotheses)**  
**MEDTHREE analysis (Total, Direct and Indirect & Effects)**

Effect Type	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
<b>Total Effect</b>	0.575	0.048	11.797	0.000	0.479	0.671
<b>Direct Effect</b>	0.171	0.057	2.993	0.003	0.058	0.284
Path Indirect Effects	Effect	BootSE	---	---	BootLLCI	BootULCI

SL → OA → EA → EP	0.114	0.031	---	---	0.061	0.183
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Table 2 shows the demographic overview of the study's participants, including 338 faculty members. The participants' ages ranged widely. The largest age group was 41-50 years, accounting for 28.4% of the sample (n=96), followed by those 51 years or older, who accounted for 26% (n=88). The 20-30 age group accounted for 24.3% (n=82), while those aged 31-40 made up 21.3% (n=72). This distribution indicates a well-balanced representation of early-stage, mid-career, and senior faculty members, bringing diverse perspectives. The gender distribution is evenly balanced, with 172 female participants (50.9%) and 166 male participants (49.1%), resulting in a diverse sample. In terms of educational background, participants with a master's degree account for 36.1% (n=122), followed by MPhils (33.1%) (n=112) and PhDs (30.8%) (n=104). The relatively high proportion of participants with postgraduate and doctoral degrees suggests a well-educated academic sample appropriate for research involving higher education faculty. All responders (100%) are faculty, which is consistent with the study's focus on faculty members. Overall, the demographic distribution demonstrates a well-balanced and diverse sample, which increases the study's findings' application in academic settings.

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the study variables. The descriptive values for Strategic Leadership (M = 4.1289, SD = .58875), Organizational Agility (M = 3.9231, SD = .55922), Employee Agility (M = 3.9051, SD = .57051), and Employee Performance (M = 3.8577, SD = .62624). All skewness and kurtosis readings are within acceptable limits (usually -2 to +2), which supports the normality requirement for parametric statistical analysis. The skewness and Kurtosis values are likewise within acceptable limits.

The overall pattern of correlations shown in Table 4 supports the hypothesized linkages in the study model. The study found that Strategic Leadership has a positive correlation with organizational agility (r = 0.667, p < 0.01) and employee agility (r = 0.583, p < 0.01). The strong, positive relationships between variables provide empirical evidence that strategic leadership improves agility and performance in academic institutions.

Table 5 about direct hypothesis testing shows that Strategic Leadership has a positive association with Organizational Agility ( $\beta = 0.6332$ , p < 0.001) and Employee Agility ( $\beta = 0.2384$ , p < 0.001). Organizational Agility also significantly correlated with Employee Agility ( $\beta = 0.4273$ , p < 0.001). Furthermore, Strategic Leadership ( $\beta = 0.1717$ , p = 0.003), Organizational Agility ( $\beta = 0.2966$ , p < 0.001), and Employee Agility ( $\beta = 0.4248$ , p < 0.001) each variable has a significant positive impact on the employee performance (EP). These findings support the proposed direct hypotheses, indicating that Strategic Leadership and Organizational Agility play crucial roles in enhancing agility and overall performance outcomes.

Table 6 shows the findings of a mediation analysis using the MEDTHREE approach for total, direct, and indirect effects. The mediation study found a substantial impact of strategic leadership on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.5757$ , p < 0.001). After accounting for the mediators (Organizational Agility and Employee Performance), the direct effect remained significant but decreased ( $\beta = 0.1717$ , p = 0.003), suggesting partial mediation. The indirect path SL → OA → EA → EP was significant ( $\beta = 0.1149$ , Boot LLCI = 0.0619, Boot ULCI = 0.1832), indicating that Organizational Agility and Employee Performance mediate the relationship between strategic leadership and employee performance.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study sheds light on how strategic leadership influences faculty performance in Pakistani higher education, specifically through the mediating roles of organizational and employee (faculty) agility. Using data from 338 faculty members at both public and private HEIs, the findings add to the expanding corpus of leadership and organizational behavior literature by verifying the sequential mediation mechanism between strategic leadership and performance outcomes.

The findings strongly support all four hypotheses and are consistent with the broader theoretical

framework of the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), which holds that organizations must constantly develop and reconfigure internal competencies to adapt to rapidly changing environments. Strategic leadership, as revealed in this study, is critical in building such dynamic skills by increasing agility at both the institutional and individual levels. Leaders who demonstrate strategic vision, adaptability, and long-term orientation create cultures in which agility becomes incorporated in the organizational fabric, allowing for speedier decision-making, increased creativity, and, ultimately, greater faculty performance.

In higher education, strategic leaders—often Vice Chancellors, Deans, and senior faculty heads— influence faculty performance not only through directives, but also by creating nimble organizational processes and individual mindsets capable of handling academic and administrative uncertainty. These leaders shape not only the formal structures but also the informal cultural norms that allow agility to thrive. Consistent with previous findings (Aghina et al., 2020; Kumkale, 2022), this study demonstrates that strategic leadership considerably promotes organizational agility (H1). This suggests that when leaders participate in strategic behaviors like visualizing future issues, allocating resources, and supporting experimentation, they foster environments conducive to rapid change and innovation. These nimble institutions, in turn, affect individual faculty members by demonstrating adaptive behaviors and diminishing resistance to change. Furthermore, the study reveals that organizational agility has a beneficial impact on faculty agility (H2), supporting the idea that when institutions are responsive and flexible, faculty members are better able to modify their teaching, research, and administrative practices.

This aligns with work by Doz and Kosonen (2010), who argue that leadership agility enables organizations to dynamically shift strategic orientation and redeploy capabilities as necessary. Hypotheses 3 and 4 further underscore the critical mediating role of agility in the relationship between strategic leadership and faculty performance. The study found that employee agility positively impacts performance (H3), echoing prior studies by Pulakos et al. (2000) and Sherehiy and Karwowski (2014), which link individual adaptability to higher job performance across sectors, including academia. Most importantly, the sequential mediation effect (H4) demonstrates that strategic leadership has both a direct and indirect impact on faculty performance. This sophisticated view adds a new perspective to the literature on leadership in higher education, particularly in developing nations. It emphasizes that, while strategic leadership is important, performance benefits are realized via the development of agility, both structurally and individually. These findings are especially important to Pakistan's higher education sector, where bureaucratic rigidity and political meddling frequently impede institutional effectiveness (Hoodbhoy 2009). In such situations', growing agility is not a luxury, but rather a requirement for survival and growth.

In conclusion, this study provides strong empirical evidence highlighting the critical role of strategic leadership in improving teacher performance through the sequential mechanisms of organizational agility and employee agility in Pakistan's higher education sector. The study broadens theoretical understanding of leadership effectiveness by demonstrating the mediating influence of agility at both the institutional and individual levels, highlighting that performance improvements are facilitated by the deliberate cultivation of adaptive, future-oriented institutional capacities in addition to direct leader-follower interactions. By framing agility as a proactive and transformative capability rather than a reactive response, this study positions it as a strategic enabler that enables institutions to anticipate, navigate, and actively shape emerging challenges, thereby contributing significantly to the literature on leadership and higher education management.

As global higher education landscapes become increasingly volatile and complex, marked by technological disruption, evolving learner needs, and resource constraints, this research underscores the urgency for universities to invest in leadership development that fosters strategic foresight and agility at all levels. Institutions that actively embed agile mindsets and practices across their structures and faculty bodies will not only navigate change more effectively but also harness it as a source of innovation and competitive advantage. Ultimately, this study advocates for a shift in institutional paradigms: from rigid hierarchies to flexible ecosystems, from traditional command-and-control models to inclusive, strategic

leadership that empowers faculty to thrive in an era of continuous transformation.

### **5.1. Implications of the Study**

This research has several implications for higher education, including theoretical, practical, and at the policy level. Higher education institutions must prioritize leadership development efforts that focus on strategic thinking, vision creation, and the cultivation of agility. Administrative training that follows traditional paradigms should be changed or augmented with components that teach administrators how to effect change in unexpected contexts, stimulate creativity, and improve faculty development through adaptability and response. HEIs should incorporate agility as a basic idea into their strategic planning, reform, and digital transformation initiatives. To put this into practice, faculty members must be given enough resources, professional autonomy, and organized opportunities for ongoing development, allowing them to adopt and refine flexible approaches to teaching and research. Fostering such agility among academic staff not only improves pedagogical and scholarly creativity but also increases institutional resilience in the face of technological breakthroughs, changing pedagogical paradigms, and shifting demographic dynamics in the higher education landscape.

Finally, by focusing on Pakistan's higher education sector, this study bridges a significant regional vacuum in the literature on strategic leadership and agility. It provides context-specific empirical observations from South Asia, a region that is under-represented in mainstream management studies, broadening the theoretical applicability of leadership and agility frameworks to more diverse, complex, and dynamic institutional settings.

### **5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

This study provides useful insights into the interrelationships between strategic leadership, organizational and employee agility, and employee performance; however, there are numerous limitations that should be noted. First, using a cross-sectional research design limits the capacity to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal designs in future studies could provide a better understanding of how these associations develop. Second, the sample was restricted to faculty members from higher education institutions, which may limit the findings' applicability to other sectors or organizational contexts. Third, while this study looked at organizational and employee agility as mediating variables, future research should widen the analytical scope by including more mediators or moderators to provide a more complete picture of the leadership-performance nexus.

Future research could broaden the scope by examining similar relationships across diverse industries and cultural contexts, allowing for a deeper understanding of how varying environmental, social, and economic factors influence the dynamics between these variables.

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