



Exploring the Effects of Social Media Usage and Employer Branding on Employee Loyalty: The Mediating Role of Internal Communication

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ABSTRACT

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This research examined the relationship between social media usage, employer branding, internal communication, and employee loyalty within the educational institutions in Quetta, Pakistan. Drawing on pre-existing theories like communication visibility theory, signaling theory, and social exchange theory, the study proposes that social media usage and employer branding influence employee loyalty both directly and indirectly through the mediation of internal communication. This study used quantitative, cross-sectional design, and the data for the study was collected through an online questionnaire. The sample size was 242, including academic, administrative, and technical employees of private and public educational institutions within the city, using a non-probability convenience and snowball sampling approach. The proposed model was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Findings showed that social media usage and employer branding had a positive relationship with employee loyalty. In addition to that social media usage and employer branding had a positive indirect relationship with employee loyalty through the mediation of internal communication. The mediation analysis indicated that internal communication partially mediates the relationship of social media usage and employer branding with employee loyalty. The model explained 22.2% of variance for internal communication and 27.4% variance for employee loyalty. The study contributes by presenting internal communication as a mediating mechanism through which digital communication practices and employer branding signals are associated with employee loyalty in an under-examined educational context of a developing city. Particularly, the findings suggest that educational institutions should align workplace social media, employer branding practices, and internal communication to support and enhance employee loyalty.

Introduction

Today, talented and skilled employees are recognized as valuable organizational resources (Ouachi & Alaoui, 2023), and with the ever changing business environment it is crucial for organizations to not only attract but also retain skilled and capable employees for longer tenures (Kossyva et al., 2021; Phuong & Vinh, 2020). As organizations transitioned towards digitalization, it

brought a major paradigm shift across the modern workplaces (Singh et al., 2024), this enhanced global interconnectivity and allowed the employees to find better work opportunities worldwide, intensifying competition and demand for skilled worker, making them a scarce resource (Barbulescu et al., 2024; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2020).

consequently, this also allowed organizations to have better chances at attracting talented employees (Kumar et al., 2026). However, retaining them remained a formidable challenge (Shah & Palariya, 2025) and so employee loyalty emerged as a core element (Phuong & Vinh, 2020), a strategic priority for organizations that were aiming to reduce the turnover rate and boost a more sustained and devoted workforce and better retention (Wahyudi et al., 2023).

Although employee loyalty is now widely recognized as a core element for organizational success, many organizations find it difficult to retain the employees because of multifaceted internal and external factors (Endang Satmiasih et al., 2025). As the current human resource evaluate employers on multiple aspects and factors before committing loyalty to them (Bendaravičienė & Vitkauskas, 2024). Among the several organizational practices utilized to improve employee loyalty, research has recognized employer branding (Asthana et al., 2026; Hadi & Ahmed, 2018), social media usage (Alshami & Alawi, 2024), and internal communication (Iskandar & Mani, 2021) to have a substantial amount of influence on employee loyalty (Nurhasanah & Qolby, 2025; Santos et al., 2023a).

Existing research has addressed and investigated these variables independently or in different combination across diverse sectors and organizational settings. Numerous studies focused on a distinct individual relationship between the variables; like for instance previously studies have examined how employer branding influences employee retention and loyalty (Aliya & Yulianti, 2026; Ouachi & Alaoui, 2023), or how social media usage impacts employee engagement and commitment (Alshami & Alawi, 2024; Arshad et al., 2025), or internal communication influence on organizational commitment and loyalty (Santos et al., 2023a) etc.

The current literature body examines these variables from different perspectives and demonstrate importance of employer branding, social media usage, and internal communication in influencing various employee and organizational outcomes. Like in particular, internal communication has been linked with employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty in higher-education institutions (Nguyen & Ha, 2023a). However, the body of knowledge remains fragmented as these variables have largely been examined in isolation or partial combinations and so little empirical evidence is found regarding how these variables collectively influence employee loyalty particularly in the educational sector.

More specifically, the research adds to the literature by moving beyond isolated or pairwise relationships among the SMU, EB, IC, and EL. This study positions IC as the organizational mechanism through which digital communication practices and employer brand signals can lead to enhancing EL-related perceptions and outcomes. In doing so, the study integrates communication visibility theory, signaling theory, and social exchange theory into a single workable explanatory framework, where SMU within the institute makes the interactions and information more visible, EB signals and organizational values becomes open and clear, and it enables the employees to interpret, experience and reciprocate those signals through a stronger loyalty and dedication towards the institute.

Furthermore educational institutes present a unique organizational context because enhancing loyalty and retaining qualified academic staff directly influence institutions performance and long-term sustainability (Endang Satmiasih et al., 2025; Mukwawaya & Mutambara, 2025). Moreover, educational institutes in a developing region face many difficulties in retaining their employees due to multifaceted resource constraints (Dlamini et al., 2023; Kuuyelleh et al., 2022; Olukorede et al., 2026). This context is particularly relevant in developing regions such as Quetta, where educational institutes operate under such constraints while continuously competing to attract and retain talented employees (Azhar & Munir, 2025; Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah et al., 2024).

Thus, this study examines the relationship between the elements by developing a Single cohesive model and investigates how employer branding and social media usage influence employee loyalty through the mediation of internal communication in the educational institutes of a developing city like Quetta.

The contribution of the study is not limited to only examining the four constructs into a single unified model. Rather it explains how distinct organizational practices may operate through a shared IC pathway and effect the EL. Establishing IC as a mechanism that connects organizational practices with employee-level outcomes. Further enhancing the current research data base, shirking the contextual gap. Also, this research provides practical insights for educational institute in Quetta and other developing regions with similar context, aiming to strengthen their workforce commitment and long-term sustainability. Along with that this study

also provides a contextual contribution by examining this integrated mechanism among employees of educational institutions in Quetta.

Literature Review & Hypothesis Development

The purpose of this section is to review the existing literature related to social media usage (SMU), employer branding (EB), internal communication (IC), and employee loyalty (EL) and to establish the theoretical foundation of the study. Particularly, the literature is examined to assess the relationship of these variables and establish how SMU and EB influences IC and EL, while also assessing how IC serves as a mediating mechanism through which SMU and EB contributes to EL. Based on the existing empirical evidence, the relationships among the constructs are subsequently developed into the proposed hypotheses.

Social Media Usage and Internal Communication

Digitalization has transformed the organizational communication systems (Deep, 2023), shifting the traditional communication methods to swifter, transparent and more seamless practices enhancing connectivity and operational effectiveness across the organization (Mialkovska et al., 2024). Particularly social media platforms facilitate real time information exchange and knowledge sharing across the organization and server as a vital channel for disseminating organizational culture, values, and expectations with the entire work force (Fuciu et al., 2025; Siddik et al., 2024) thereby, streamlining the IC flow (Laitinen & Sivunen, 2020).

By leveraging social media platforms organizations can encourage a more seamless and transparent exchange of information (Fuciu et al., 2025) and it allows the employees for real-time communication across organization and leads to a more cohesive internal environment (Dr. Syeda Afshan Aziz et al., 2025). Within the workplace SMU can facilitate the dissemination of the information, stronger collaboration, and enhance knowledge sharing across the organizational boundaries (Chierici et al., 2018a; Yang et al., 2021). Professional SMU is considered an very useful working resource which provides information and support the networking within the organization enabling effectiveness (Oksa et al., 2023).

Evidence suggests that social media improves cross departmental collaboration and overall communication within the departments (Dr. Syeda Afshan Aziz et al., 2025), it also support knowledge intensive teamwork enabling a smooth knowledge management operation system to foster a cooperative culture (Khoa & Huynh, 2024), and it facilitates the teamwork between employees improving the overall collaborative effectiveness of the employees (Warnakulasuriya & Jayasinghe, 2025).

Thus, digital platforms serves as an important tool for bridging the information gap, thereby enhance interpersonal connectivity between employees boosting organization engagement (Bulinska-Stangrecka et al., 2021; Oksa et al., 2023). Existing literature supports the notion that social media integration complements IC practices, it improves the speed, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the information sharing within the organization resulting in better collaboration, higher employee engagement and smoother information dissemination across the organization (Kišić, 2020).

From a theoretical viewpoint, communication visibility theory suggests that social media improves employee's awareness regarding the content and source of organizational communication boosting the overall collaboration and coordination, while media richness theory highlights that the social media tools facilitates communication through interactive features such as instant messaging, commenting, and file sharing, thereby enhancing the overall quality of IC within the organization (Cao et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2021).

This relationship is particularly important and relevant in the context of educational institutes. As an effective IC network establishes in an institute it promotes informational connectivity across departments (Lamamra et al., 2025). Academic staff needs to share information constantly and instantly with one and another across departments at times thus, integrating social media as a strategic tool allows the required frequency of information sharing rather efficient (Aziz et al., 2022). This boosts the coordination across departments through continuous information exchange. So, in this context, social media can act as an accessible channel for disseminating institutional information and facilitating interaction among employees, enhancing the overall support system and a more connected and responsive internal communication environment(Kazemian & Susan B., 2020).

Hence, the notion that social media facilitates a stronger, faster multidirectional information sharing keeping employees informed and engaged enabling collaboration across functional boundaries. Resulting into better knowledge sharing, stronger trust and an enhanced, effective transparent internal communication system across organization is supported strongly by the existing research (Warnakulasuriya & Jayasinghe, 2025; Werling & Maier, 2022). While keeping the existing theorical and empirical evidence in

view, it is observed that SMU is not simply a supplementary channel rather it is a practice that can strengthen IC. Based on this evidence the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Social media usage has a positive and significant impact on internal communication.

Employer Branding and Internal Communication

EB is an organizations identity and reputation as a desirable employer, a solid EB helps the organization attract and retain employees (Ahmed et al., 2022), which provides an edge to the organization in the labor market (Aditi Bisht & Kataria, 2025). Now EB has evolved beyond being just a requirement strategy (Malik, 2019; Tanni & Arief, 2026a) into a crucial organizational practice which shapes perception and experiences of the employee throughout their employment tenure (Rys, Schollaert, & Hoyer, 2024). EB is recognized as a multifaceted practice that externally attracts talent and internally retains talent (Thang & Trang, 2024).

However EB does not work as a standalone organizational tool/practice instead research conceptualized it as an integrative, collaborative mechanism, it functions through complementary organizational procedures (Rajitha, 2025). The effectiveness of EB lies in how consistently the promised values are communicated with the employees (Sharma et al., 2025) thus, IC plays a curtail role as a fundamental supporting mechanism (Rajitha, 2025), as employees perception of EB is shaped when the values are communicated clearly and enacted to build experiences (Näppä et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2023b).

Research suggests that EB and IC are intrinsically linked as both elements complement and reinforce each other. Organizations with a solid EB framework (Krywalski Santiago, 2023a) promotes a more participative approach rather than one way communication, such symmetrical communication system leads to efficient communication and mutual understanding between the employees and the management (Pološki Vokić et al., 2023; Yalın & Mızrak, 2024). This type of approach reduces communication barriers and promotes cross-hierarchical communication, cultivating a more cohesive organizational environment (Rinaldi & Sunaryo Putra, 2022).

This notion is grounded by several key theories for instance, social exchange theory suggests that an employee's attitude and behavior is mostly molded by the value they believe they get from their employers, and when organizations deliver their promises and communicate about it effectively it strengthens the employees perceptions of being valued (Ilyas, 2019; Nguyen & Ha, 2023a). The notion is further backed and explained by the signaling theory stating the EB acts as a deliberately built message that provides a credible and valuable information to the employee regarding the organization, when these messages are clearly disseminated it reduces the ambiguity, bridges the information gap between the employer and the staff, cultivating an environment of trust (Aun & Ariffin, 2025; Connelly et al., 2024). EB conveys key information about the organizations identity and values while effective IC ensures that these ideas reach the employees and are understood accurately (Mohammed et al., 2025) and, psychological contract theory builds on this idea arguing that these organizational signals progressively develop into unspoken promises between the employer and employee, and with effective communication the notion is reinforced ensuring that employees expectations are managed throughout their employment and the promises by the employer are enacted upon (Deepa & Baral, 2021; Ilyas, 2019; Setiawati, 2019).

Within educational institutions this relationship aids the academic and administrative staff to perceive the institutional mission and employer value proposition, especially when the values can be shared constantly throughout the institution and are reflected within the work environment (Deepa & Baral, 2021; Pološki Vokić et al., 2023). To support the internal distribution of employer-brand values, organizations may depend on IC as a tactical mechanism. IC and EB are conceptually linked through shared exchange and relationship-building processes; effective IC can help employees comprehend organizational values and develop more optimistic relationships with their employer (Ćorić & Špoljarić, 2021). Also, EB initiatives supported by IC cultivate and build employer identity further reinforcing stronger loyalty (Bothra, 2024).

Collectively, the existing literature and theoretical evidence suggests that EB and IC are vital drivers for establishing organizational values and expectations while ensuring that they are communicated throughout the organization effectively. As a result, firms with well-established EB practices are expected to demonstrate a more efficient and effective IC system integration throughout the organization. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Employer branding has a positive and significant impact on internal communication.

Internal Communication and Employee Loyalty

IC has long been recognized as a strategic tool (Wuersch et al., 2024). In the present IC represents a fundamental organizational process rather than a simple communication mechanism (Carreira et al., 2023). As organizations continue to sustain in the contemporary technology driven environment, maintaining a strong, effective, and transparent IC system is indispensable (Fahmi, 2024). It fosters collaboration, effective transmission of information, enhances transparency, builds a sense of belonging (Mhagama et al., 2026), and cultivates a more cohesive environment strengthening EL by establishing an open two-way communication across all hierarchical level within the organization (Pop et al., 2023).

EL relies on both structural HR practices and the daily experience of the employees within the organization (Rahmawati, 2026). IC act as a core element in shaping these experiences, by reducing ambiguity during communication and encouraging the employees to participate it strengthens the employee-employer relationship (Hasmin, 2025), as employees perceived to be more valued, informed, and respected (AIREN et al., 2026). When the communication is efficient and effective it enhances the psychological attachment and strengthens the loyalty (Deepa & Baral, 2021).

Furthermore, research suggests that IC consistently contributes to EL (Ndlovu et al., 2021) by leveraging different element such as effective communication gratification, characterized by transparency, openness, and meaningful information exchange which enhances job satisfaction (Nguyen & Ha, 2023b), better employee engagement, and sense of community within the workplace which leads to promoting a positive behavior like organization citizenship and sustained commitment (Alali, 2022). Existing literature suggest that IC strengthens EL both directly or indirectly by influencing different positive employee experiences strengthening the employer and employee relationship (Nguyen & Ha, 2023b).

The positive relationship between IC and EL is constantly demonstrated that effective communication builds trust in the employer and align employee's goal with that of the employer's and boost the overall organizational commitment (Řehoř & Vrchota, 2018). Similarly it is also suggested that those organization that sustain an open communication channel experience higher employee satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and lower turnover rates all of which contributes to sustained EL (Sugeha et al., 2024).

The theoretical grounding of the relation between IC and EL can be explained by the complementing theories, signaling theory suggests that organization send signals, effectively communicating subtle values and intention to the employees. when IC consistently shares values, intentions, and commitment toward employees, they pick it as positive signals. In turn, when communication is characterized by openness, transparency, and consistency employees interpret these signals as favorable organizational practices through stronger commitment and long term sustained loyalty (Pletscher et al., 2026; Rao & Vohra, 2026). In addition, social exchange theory complements the notion as the favorable organization practices are communicated throughout the organization it builds the value perception for the employees shaping their work attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, these communication practices are perceived as indicators of a positive exchange relationship and are more likely to reciprocate through stronger organizational commitment and loyalty (Rizqi & Bakti, 2026).

In the educational institutes IC plays a decisive role, frequent and transparent communication leads to developing a stronger bond with the employer as employees reacts to the information being shared and the underlying signals that's conveyed along with those messages (Khan et al., 2024), clear communication that clearly depicts and outlines the expectations and its enactment boosts their motivation levels and enhance the level of connectivity between the employee and employer ultimately boosting the EL (Khan et al., 2024). When the educational institutes integrate IC directly into planning day-to-day operations, discussions, and use it in conveying clear administrative procedures, long term loyalty flourishes as two-way communication strengthens the engagement, follow up ,and feedback loop at the same time it clearly conveys development opportunities and align employee expectations with positive institutional outcomes (Taufiq et al., 2026).

So based on the available evidence, IC can be regarded as a core function that can influence EL within the organization, thus, the following hypothesis has been purposed:

H3: Internal communication has a positive and significant impact on employee loyalty.

Social Media Usage and Employee Loyalty

In the current digital landscape social media has progressed beyond being a marketing tool (Bennani, 2023) or a simple communication channel initially designed for personal interaction, rather it is now viewed as a strategic function, a vital

component of the organizations communication system (Fuciu et al., 2025) thus, many organizations have integrated social media into their work setting (X. Zhang et al., 2019a).

Within organizations, SMU expedites knowledge sharing, by fostering transparency in communication channels, boost teamwork, encourage an informatively integrated and high engagement environment, enabling better connectivity and collaboration in organizational activities despite the geographical or hierarchical boundaries (Wu, 2024).

SMU does not only enhance the communication efficiency, beyond that it also influences and shapes employee's workplace experiences (Caubang et al., 2025; X. Zhang et al., 2019b). Such positive experiences foster and strengthen the sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2021), commitment to the organization and in turn loyal employees further contributes to shaping how the organization is perceived overall (Alnehabi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2025; Kamila et al., 2020; Vasantha Kumari.K et al., 2025).

SMU has primarily altered the relationship between employees and their organizations (Yoganathan et al., 2021). when used for both work and social purposes, it cannot only improve the job satisfaction but reduce the turnover intention as well (Zhou et al., 2022a). collectively, these findings suggest that organizational SMU contributes to EL by fostering stronger organizational relationships and more positive workplace experiences (Alshami & Alawi, 2024).

The relationship of SMU and EL can be further explained by the existing theoretical evidence. Communication Visibility Theory suggests that social media platforms enhance the communication visibility including visibility of organizational interactions, communication networks, and knowledge flows of the employees (Zhou et al., 2022b). by making the communication more transparent and open, it enhances the organization awareness and enables the employees to better understand the ongoing and future organizational processes and collaborate more effectively. (Yang et al., 2021). While social exchange theory provides a lens explaining the clear effects of the effective communication experience, SMU enhances the collaboration and connectivity leading to better working and employee satisfaction building a psychological connection, these perceived benefits and experience supportive workplace interactions reciprocate through positive attitudes and behavior fostering a stronger organizational commitment (Naim & Bulinska-Stangrecka, 2019). This relation can be further strengthened through Social Capital Theory, which emphasize on the importance of social connectivity, networks, and shared relations within the organizations. An effective organizational social media assist in building a valuable social capital through strengthening of interpersonal relations and mutual trust which leads to increased organizational commitment (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Zhou et al., 2022a).

For educational institutes the potential effect of SMU on EL is rather relevant as, SMU allows the institutions to establish a two way communication system encouraging transparency and engagement within the institution, which can support and built EL (Oblakulov, 2026; Yusoff et al., 2025). As a result, the connectivity that's formed makes the workplace more meaningful and mission-driven (Hidayati, 2024; Raman & Jaiswal, 2017). Institutional staff uses social media for communication and problem-solving at work (Cilliers et al., 2017) also, SMU can create a alignment between internal culture and external image which can support positive perceptions of the employer among the employees (Yameen et al., 2021). Deliberate use of social media in the institutions can assist the employees to focus on positive behaviors such as collaboration and productive digital interaction (Kaur & Sandhu, 2021) which can further build the sense of community and trust in the employee this can lead to strengthening the emotional connection and attachment of the employee to the employer (Shalihati et al., 2025).

Based on this theoretical evidence it can be observed that SMU contributes to EL by enhancing communication, collaboration, engagement, and employee's connection with the organization. Keeping the empirical evidence in view the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Social media usage has a positive and significant impact on employee loyalty.

Employer Branding and Employee Loyalty

EB is an important organizational strategy for attracting talented employees while maintaining positive relationship with the existing employee (Malik, 2019; Nurhasanah & Qolby, 2025) and organizations across glob have acknowledged this notion. Thus, employers now adequately invested in EB strategies (Asthana et al., 2026).

the multifaceted nature of EB (Thang & Trang, 2024) allows the organization to attract prospective employees while shaping how the current employees perceive and relate to the organization (Krywalski Santiago, 2023b), this nature enhances the employer attractiveness which is closely associated with EL .

Research has observed that by implementing deliberate EB strategies organizations can achieve a higher degree of loyalty and retention in their workforce (Nurhasanah & Qolby, 2025) and also a strong employer brand is assumed to be the main reason for low turnover but also existing employees are less willing to switch in many cases (Abdurrohim et al., 2024; Gracita & Anindita, 2023).

Further it is suggested that EB influences organizational commitment by reducing turnover intention (Bharadwaj et al., 2021) and plus when the benefits and values attached to the EB strategy are observed it forces satisfaction and commitment which are core precursors of stronger EL (Gulo & Waruwu, 2025; Khuong & Linh, 2020).

Also, when employees perceive the employer as an attractive employer, a good and reliable company to work at, they are more likely to feel attached to the organization and want to remain there. Effective EB strategies can transmit symbolic meaning and as employees feel that they fit well in the organization (Lievens et al., 2007) and with its values the develop a sense of affective commitment and are more likely to go the extra mile.

Theories support this notion the relationship can be explained by these complementary theories. Building on social exchange theory it explains the trends why EB influences EL, it suggest that this relation is based on the reciprocal exchange between the involved parties when the employees believe that the organizations has greatly invest in them this creates a sense of value proposition they reciprocate in return through greater organizational commitment, engagement, and loyalty (Aman-Ullah et al., 2021; Elizabeth Michael et al., 2025). While psychological contract theory supports the idea that by implementing EB strategic initiatives employees perception can be influenced and by communicating the value proposition properly with employees their expectations can be fulfilled and in turn strengthen their job satisfaction level and overall intentions to stay at the organization (ILYAS, 2019). And organizational identification theory builds on the notion that EL strengthens when employees perceives that their goals and values aligns with that of the organizations goals and values, and strong EB enacts and communicates these values in a consist manner enabling employees to identify more closely with the organization (Aman-Ullah et al., 2021). This is backed by employee-based brand equity theory, when employees perceive their employer as attractive they develop a strong sense of alliance and act as brand ambassadors exhibiting that aligns with organizational values, this leads to higher commitment and contribute to sustained employee loyalty (Nyein & Kohsuwan, 2019; Uthayasuriyan & Vijayalakshmi, 2015).

Research indicates that EB is as essential for educational institutes as any other organization in attracting and retaining employees, which is closely related to enhancing and directly driving EL (Ciptagustia et al., 2023). Empirical evidence also suggests that a well-built employer brand can improve employee retention, satisfaction and EL in educational institutions (Srinivas et al., 2024). A strong EB establishes a consistent, sustainable advantage for the institutions, aligning employee expectations with their experiences (Mostafa et al., 2021). Thus, taken together, EB enhances EL not only by depicting the attractiveness of the employer but by building the perception that the institution is a credible, purposeful, and worthwhile place to build a career (Mawarni & Lianto, 2026; Mostafa et al., 2021; Srinivas et al., 2024).

Based on this theoretical evidence the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Employer branding has a positive and significant direct effect on employee loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Internal Communication in the Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Employee Loyalty

Prior discussion in this paper already establishes the notion that SMU can influence both IC and EL individually. However, existing literature suggests that the impact of SMU on EL is enhanced when IC mediates it.

Research has observed that when social media is used for information exchange internally it enhances engagement (Oksa et al., 2020). As SMU offers new possibilities to collaborate in real time (García-García et al., 2017; E. P. Williams et al., 2018) it provides the organizations with a more interactive and accessible channel for communicating which ensure feedback regularity and leads to cultivating stronger bonds between the employees enhancing their work experience, which are established precursors for EL (Omary & Britto, 2024).

The relationship between SMU and IC has already been represented previously in this paper using Communication Visibility Theory (Sun et al., 2020), building on that notion further utilization of social media to enhance and amplify the visibility of organizational interactions (Lane et al., 2024), communication networks, and knowledge exchange for the employees throughout the organization enables employees to better understand organizational decision and goals along with the ongoing processes and

develop a greater how work is coordinated (Zhou et al., 2022a) . This reduces the communication obstacles and supports a factual participative communication environment (Gbaden & Robert, 2025).

Now the influence of SMU on EL may not arise solely from the social media itself but by the quality of communication it fosters. A solid IC system within an organization shapes how employees feel about it, research treats IC as one of the main drivers of employee commitment (Sinitsyna et al., 2026).

When the organizations utilizes social media to enhances the flow of information exchange and makes it smoother this build a sense of community among the employees which in turn indirectly strengthen the bond between the employer and employee further (Kim & Uysal, 2025; Niño, 2025). Accordingly the mediating mechanism of IC ensures that the SMU digital interactions are facilitated and translated into consisted and quality, which ultimately drives towards long term commitment and EL (Andrias et al., 2025a).

IC's mediating mechanism can be further explained through the social exchange theory when the organizational information exchange is smooth, accessible and support an interactive environment employees see it as valuable building practices, which leads to positive employee attitude, stronger organizational commitment and enhanced loyalty (Naim & Bulinska-Stangrecka, 2019). Research shows that EL increases when robust IC is used combinedly with social media support the mediating role of IC between SMU and EL (Chierici et al., 2018b).

In the context of educational institutes this relationship is even more relevant. As effective communication and information exchange is essential among the academic staff (B Quintos, 2026). Cross departmental communication is a frequent in educational institution employees interact across departments and hierarchical levels making an interactive and two-way communicational environment an essential (Handoko, 2023). This fosters greater collaboration among the academic staff and leads to enhanced satisfaction and improves the overall operational process (Handoko, 2023).

So based on the empirical evidence, the relationship between SMU and EL with the mediating effect of IC, purposing that IC may serve as an important pathway through which SMU strengthens employee's communication patterns and connection with one another along with fostering long-term loyalty toward their educational institutions. and the following hypothesis has been purposed:

H6: Internal communication mediates the relationship between social media usage and employee loyalty.

The Mediating Role of Internal Communication in the Relationship between Employer Branding and Employee Loyalty

As established previously in this study EB influence IC and EL directly under different contexts. However, the relation sometimes exceeds beyond direct influence, so this research is examining the relationship between EB and EL with the mediating effect of IC.

The relationship between EB and IC is usually presented as a complementary link, as both the variables works interconnectedly developing and maintaining employee to employer relation (Yalın & Mızrak, 2024), they shape how employees understand and perceive their employer (Kashive & Khanna, 2017), where EB contributes to how employee awareness, positive attitudes, trust, and loyalty is shaped and IC ensures to establish and sustain these relationships through continuous communication building the employee value propositions employee brand commitment (Sinčić Ćorić & Špoljarić, 2021).

Signaling theory provide a theoretical backing to this notion, it suggests that EB communicates multiple signals (Heide et al., 2024) regarding organization's values, culture, and the benefits portraying what the organization represents (Tanni & Arief, 2026b; Thang & Trang, 2024). And as the effectiveness of the signals depends on the effective and consistent dissemination and interpretation by employees (Ćorić & Špoljarić, 2021) and effective IC system plays a crucial role as an exchange channel (Ali et al., 2021). It creates a pathway to disseminate employer brand values and organizational messages across all hierarchal levels (Madondo et al., 2024; Tomažič & Kovačič Čelofiga, 2021). Research suggest that IC can strengthen EB's credibility by mitigating information gaps which allows the organizational values to be understood throughout the workforce (Abdullahi Aliyu Maiwada & Barth Oshionebo, 2024).

The mediation mechanism of IC is crucial as according to the existing research the social exchange theory explains that employee is likely to develop a stronger attachment when organizational promises are consistently communicated, reinforced, and reflected in employee's experiences(P. Williams et al., 2021). An effective IC channel helps reinforce the organization's identity, commitment, and the willingness of the employee work there by effectively guiding the internal information exchange system and knowledge transferring along with the organizational values, policies, and feedback within the organization (Kucherov et al.,

2022). Such communication guides employee's perception of being valued and supported by the employer. Thus, enhancing their overall employment experience and EL (Kimani, 2024).

In the context of educational institutions this complementary link between EB, IC, and EL is vital. As IC assists in spreading the employer brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty across the company this fortifies the EB naturally. This internal branding has a optimistic effect on employee's attitudes and shapes a more supportive and loyal workforce (Mandey et al., 2019; Scridon, 2020). Further building on the notion recent studies highlights EB and IC as one of the key precursors of Organizational commitment and EL (Putalapattu et al., 2026). When institution utilize IC in dissemination of employer value proposition making it impactful through consistent and accurate messages it can communicate internal environment, future opportunities, and shared values, which can strengthen sense of belonging (Tomažič & Kovačič Čelofiga, 2021).

Based on the existing theoretical evidence and knowledge body, this study examines the relation between the three variable and purposed the following hypothesis:

H7: Internal communication mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee loyalty.

Conceptual Framework and the Final Synthesis

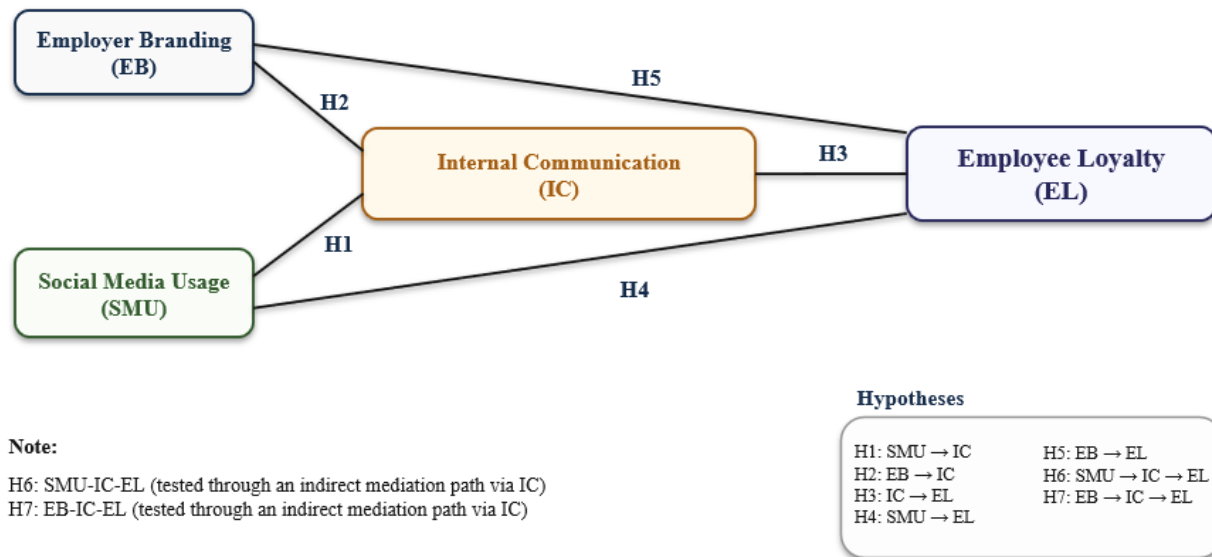


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Methodology

This study examines the relationship between the purposed variables SMU, EB, IC, and EL through a quantitative approach. A quantitative approach (Pandey et al., 2023) and deductive research logic (Hernández & Rutkowski, 2024) was considered appropriate as the study aimed at investigating the relationships between the variables in light of the prior theoretical and empirical evidence, translated into testable hypotheses and subsequently examined using statistical analysis. A cross-sectional research was used for data collection (Setia, 2016) across different educational institutes within the Quetta city including schools, colleges, universities, and academies in both public and private sectors. As the whole data was collected once from each respondent given the potential Common Method Bias (CMB) (Polas, 2025), proper procedural measures were taken into account such as ensuring respondent anonymity and a clear item design along with that CMB was further assessed through the collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) (Ezeudoka & Fan, 2024; Kock, 2015) values of the inner model all values were below the recommended threshold (<3.33) (Kock, 2015). Thus, it was safe to asses that the data was free of any CMB. Mentioned values are present in appendix-A Furthermore, the study is explanatory in nature as it seeks to examine the relationships among the proposed variables (Shirley Akorfa Batse, 2025) and at the same time, adopting a predictive orientation (Lin & Huynh, 2024) through the assessment of the model's ability to explain the endogenous constructs.

Population and Sampling

The targeted population for this study consisted of employees working in educational institutions in Quetta including both academic and administrative staff to better capture employee's perceptions regarding the examined constructs across different institutional level, job roles, and professional experiences. Non-probability convenience-based snowball sampling technique was used (Şahin & Demirbulak, 2022) because of the restrictions in terms of time, cost, and the practical difficulty of reaching employees on a large scale. Thus, the online distribution method (Iqbal et al., 2022) was deemed particularly appropriate for reaching employees across multiple educational institutions and different organizational roles in the city. As this method allowed a pragmatic solution against constraints related to time, institutional access, or the need to reach hard-to-access populations (Bhat et al., 2025; Boubker, 2024). To attain variation in the dataset, questionnaires were distributed across multiple institutional levels throughout the city. The initial respondent were encourages to share the questionnaire within their professional networks and beyond their immediate departmental peers (Şahin & Demirbulak, 2022).

Data Collection Instrument

Data for the research was collected through a structured 7-point Likert scale questionnaire (Taherdoost, 2019), the structured questionnaire consisted of four constructs SMU, EB, IC, and EL, each of the construct was measured using 5 items adapted from pre-established and validated scales from prior studies resulting into a 20-item questionnaire. The adaptation process involved minor contextual modifications to align the items with the educational institutions in Quetta, while making sure that the underlying meaning of the original measure remains same:

Construct	Source of Adapted Measurement Scale
Social Media Usage (SMU)	Huiqin Zhang, Meng Wang, & Anhang Chen (2021), Sustainability, MDPI
Employer Branding (EB)	Dolores Botella-Carrubi et al. (2021), Sustainability, MDPI
Internal Communication (IC)	Yan Ma (2022), Frontiers in Psychology
Employee Loyalty (EL)	Atiyah A. Alghamdi (2024), International Journal of Educational Management

The 7-point Likert scale response categories were coded as (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, and 7 = Strongly Agree) the response direction was maintained throughout the research process and data analysis.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected through an online structured questionnaire built on Microsoft Form, prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pre-tested (Hashim et al., 2022) with 30 respondents via pilot study to assess the clarity, and comprehensibility of the items, and assess the preliminary reliability of the instrument (Kunselman, 2024). The pilot study results demonstrated acceptable internal consistency across all four constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.815 for SMU, 0.816 for EB, 0.880 for IC, and 0.895 for EL, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Taber, 2018; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Following that the questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp and subsequently extended through respondent referrals over a period of approximately 45 days. A total of 259 responses were initially collected which was later screened for maintain data quality before the main analysis including outlying responses and responses with no variation across the measured items, were excluded during the screening process, resulting in 242 usable responses for the final analysis. The assessable sample size of 242 was justified as in addition to exceeding commonly applied sample-size guidelines for PLS-SEM, an A-priori power analysis for the structural model was conducted using Daniel Soper's A Priori Sample Size Calculator for structural equation models (Ramos-Vera, 2021). With an anticipated effect size of 0.30 for a medium effect size, a statistical power level of 0.80, 4 latent variables (constructs), 20 observed variables (indicators), and a probability level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The calculator indicated a minimum sample size of 137 to detect the expected effects, a minimum sample size for model structure = 100, and a recommended minimum = 137. For reference check appendix-B.

Data Analysis

The data was initially cleaned using Microsoft Excel and SPSS, where descriptive statistics and standard deviation checks were performed to identify and address outliers, anomalies, and responses with zero variance (Haji-Othman et al., 2024). Afterwards the data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair & Alamer, 2022) was conducted to estimate the significance of path coefficients and the mediation effect (Huang & Ichikohji, 2024).

PLS-SEM was selected because the study examines a model involving multiple latent constructs and includes both direct relationships and indirect effects (Madhlangobe & Wang, 2018) through IC. Another reason why PLS-SEM was preferred was because this study was aimed at examining the predictive capability of the purposed model, and the model included multiple constructs and paths, making PLS-SEM advantageous due to its ability to handle complex models efficiently (Madhlangobe & Wang, 2018). Thus, this approach enabled robust testing of the hypothesized relationships and the predictive capability of the overall model (Haji-Othman et al., 2024; Madhlangobe & Wang, 2018).

The analysis was conducted in two distinct stages first the assessment of the measurement model was done and then the assessment of the structural model. The measurement model was assessed using indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As for the structural model it was subsequently assessed to examine the hypothesized relationships and the explanatory and predictive performance of the model. Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the indirect effects of SMU and EB on EL through IC.

Results

This section reports the data analysis result examined for this study. The analysis was run on a sample size of 242, including both gender male and female exhibiting diverse range of experience levels ranging from more than 15 years to less than 1 year from different work experience. The values are available in appendix-C. The designations of the sample also varied enabling a rich dataset.

Measure Model Assessment

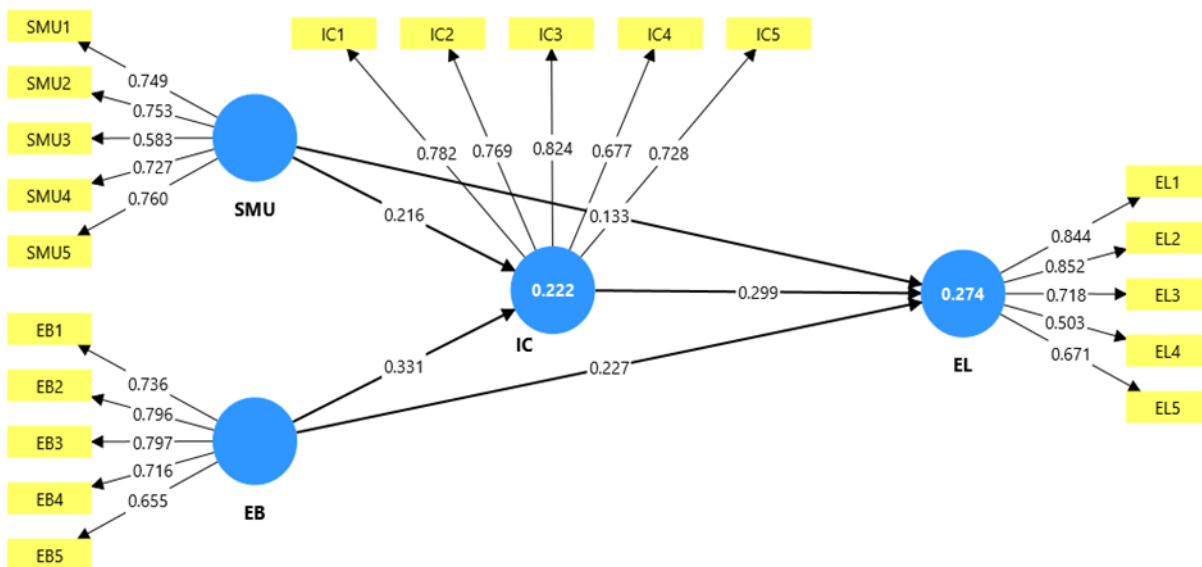


Figure 2. Measurement model

The measurement model was assessed using PLS-SEM. To ensure that before checking the relationship between the variables it could be ensured that the data was reliable and valid. The assessment involved Internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability and convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was examined by using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The values for the Cronbach's alpha range from 0.763 to 0.814, while composite reliability observed ranged from 0.840 to 0.870 across the four constructs. All values exceed the recommended threshold (Cheung et al., 2024; Souza et al., 2017), indicating satisfactory internal consistency among the indicators measuring SMU, EB, IC and EL. Values are presented in Table 1.

Indicator Reliability and Convergent Validity

Indicator reliability was examined through factor and most of the loading of the measured items were above the threshold of 0.70 (Jamali et al., 2022), demonstrating adequate individual item reliability, except for the SMU3 (0.583), EB5 (0.655), IC4 (0.677),

EL4 (0.503), and EL5 (0.671) these loadings were below 0.70 but remained above 0.50. Detailed statistical values and loadings are provided in appendix-D. These items were Retained as their removal did not improve the overall measurement model. The overall construct reliability remained acceptable. Whereas for assessing the convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) was used, the AVE values were all above from 0.50 threshold (Jamali et al., 2022) ranging from 0.515 to 0.574 across the constructs. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates adequate convergent validity. The above-mentioned values are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Outer Loadings Range, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	(AVE)
SMU	0.583-0.760	0.763	0.774	0.84	0.515
EB	0.655-0.797	0.795	0.806	0.859	0.55
IC	0.677-0.824	0.814	0.822	0.87	0.574
EL	0.503-0.852	0.771	0.817	0.846	0.532

Note: Outer loadings above 0.70, Cronbach's α and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50 indicate acceptable reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2022). (SMU) social media usage, (EB) employer branding, (IC) internal communication, (EL) employee loyalty.

Discriminant Validity

After the assessment of reliability and convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed. The study used Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion for the assessment of discriminant validity. HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85, indicating that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another (Alam et al., 2024). Also, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied and supported the discriminant validity as the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the other constructs. The statistical values and table for the HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criterion are provided in Appendix- E .

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping to test the hypothesized relationships (Changalima & Chuwa, 2025). The assessment focused on the significance and magnitude of the path coefficients, the mediating effects of Internal Communication, and the model's explanatory and predictive capabilities.

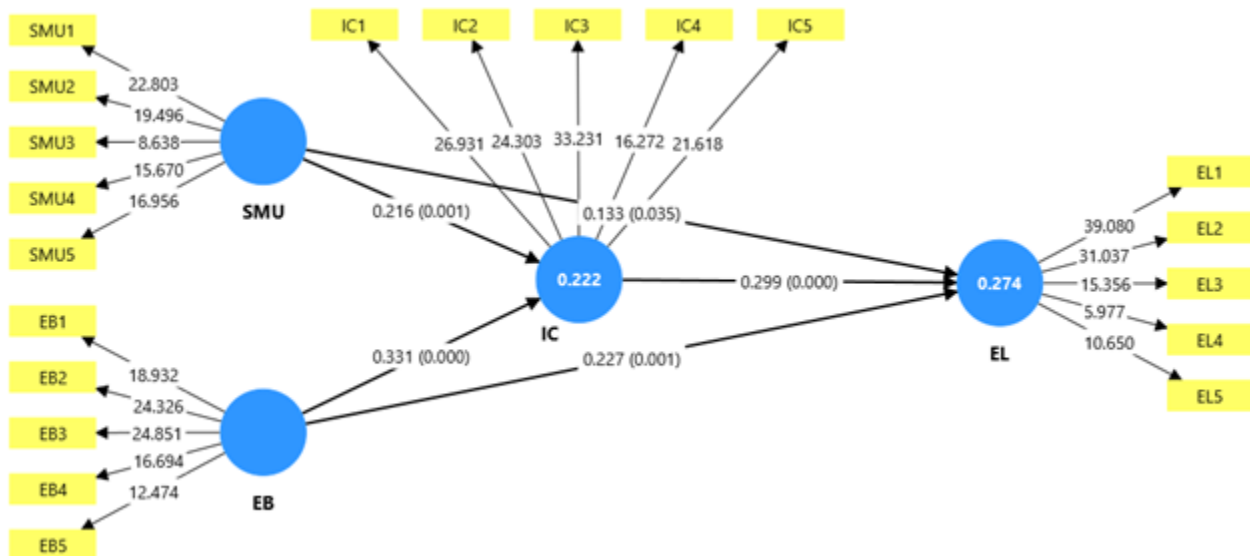


Figure 3. Assessment model

Note: Values on structural paths represent path coefficients (β) with exact software p-values in parentheses; p-values displayed as 0.000 by SmartPLS correspond to $p < 0.001$.

Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing

The relationship between the constructs was supported by the results, all directional hypotheses were evaluated using one-tailed test. SMU had a positive effect on IC ($\beta = 0.216$, $t = 3.226$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H1. while EB demonstrated the strongest path effect in the model on IC ($\beta = 0.331$, $t = 4.817$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Furthermore, IC also had a significant positive effect on EL ($\beta = 0.299$, $t = 3.600$, $p < 0.001$) supporting H3. SMU showed a positive but relatively weak direct effect on EL ($\beta = 0.133$, $t = 1.818$, $p = 0.035$) supporting H4. In contrast, EB demonstrated a strong positive direct effect on EL ($\beta = 0.227$, $t = 3.224$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H5. for reference all the mentioned values are presented in the table 2.

Table 2: path coefficient- STDEV, T-value, P-value

Hypothesis and the Path	Path Coeff (β)	Std. Dev. (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
H1. SMU -> IC	0.216	0.067	3.226	0.001
H2. EB -> IC	0.331	0.069	4.817	0.001
H3. IC -> EL	0.299	0.083	3.600	0.001
H4. SMU -> EL	0.133	0.073	1.818	0.035
H5. EB -> EL	0.227	0.070	3.224	0.001

Note: p-values below 0.05 indicate statistical significance. (SMU) social media usage, (EB) employer branding, (IC) internal communication, (EL) employee loyalty.

Mediation Analysis

The mediating paths SMU-IC-EL and EB-IC-EL were assessed in this analysis, the mediating role of IC was examined by assessing the specific indirect effects using bootstrapping. Results indicated that there was a positive and statistically significant indirect effect of SMU on EL through IC ($\beta = 0.065$, $t = 2.413$, $p = 0.008$). As the direct effect of SMU on EL also remained significant ($\beta = 0.133$, $p = 0.035$), the findings indicate that IC partially mediates the relationship between SMU and EL. Correspondingly, the indirect effect of EB on EL through IC was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.099$, $t = 2.959$, $p = 0.002$), supporting H7. Since the direct effect of EB on EL also remained significant ($\beta = 0.227$, $p = 0.001$), IC partially mediates the relationship between EB and EL. Detailed mediation results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Direct and indirect effects

Direct Effect		Specific Indirect Effect						
B	P	H6. SMU -> IC -> EL	B	T-value	UL	LL	P-value	Results
0.133	0.035	H7. EB -> IC -> EL	0.065	2.413	0.028	0.117	0.008	Partial Mediation
0.227	0.001		0.099	2.959	0.051	0.161	0.002	Partial Mediation

Note: (SMU) social media usage, (EB) employer branding, (IC) internal communication, (EL) employee loyalty.

Explanatory and Predictive Power

The explanatory power and predictive power of the structural model was evaluated using established PLS-SEM quality criteria (Changalima & Chuwa, 2025). Explanatory power of both the endogenous constructs was assessed through coefficient of determination R^2 analysis, The model explained 22.2% of the variance in IC ($R^2 = 0.222$) and 27.4% of the variance in EL ($R^2 = 0.274$). the results indicating modest explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. To assess the contribution of each exogenous construct (predictor) to the R^2 value effect size (f^2) was tested. EB demonstrated the largest effect on IC ($f^2 = 0.111$), followed by SMU effect on IC ($f^2 = 0.047$). As for EL, IC showed the largest effect size ($f^2 = 0.096$), followed by EB effect on EL ($f^2 = 0.050$), while SMU demonstrated the smallest effect on EL ($f^2 = 0.018$). Overall, the predictors demonstrated a negligible to modest effects on the endogenous constructs. To assess the predictive power of the model, the predictive relevance of the structural model was assessed using the Q^2 value. The Q^2 values for IC ($Q^2 = 0.203$) and EL ($Q^2 = 0.1804$), indicating that the

model demonstrates predictive relevance for both endogenous constructs (Boakye et al., 2024; Videira, 2023). Thus, the model has predictive relevance in explaining IC and EL. The above-mentioned values are presented in table 4.

Table 4: (R Square and F Square) and Q Square

Predictors	Outcomes	R-square	F-square	Q ² predict
SMU	IC	0.222	0.047	0.203
EB			0.111	
SMU	EL	0.274	0.018	0.180
EB			0.050	
IC			0.096	

Note: (SMU) social media usage, (EB) employer branding, (IC) internal communication, (EL) employee loyalty.

Discussion

The study deliberately discussed and inspected SMU, EB and their influence on EL through the mediation of IC within the educational institutions in Quetta. Overall, the outcomes of the study established satisfactory results and provide support for the proposed model. All the direct and indirect hypothesized relationships were statistically significant. But the magnitude of the effect varied across the variables pointing their unique contribution to EL. Overall, EB demonstrated stronger direct relationships with both IC ($\beta = 0.331$, $p < 0.001$) and EL ($\beta = 0.227$, $p = 0.001$), whereas SMU showed a comparatively weak direct effect on EL ($\beta = 0.133$, $p = 0.035$) and a significant relation with IC ($\beta = 0.216$, $p = 0.001$). Most importantly, IC emerged as the strongest predictor of EL ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$). The finding points IC as an important mechanism through which organizational practices (Kang & Sung, 2017) like SMU and EB are translated into stronger EL. The findings aligns with existing research suggesting that EB is a precursor of EL and it can be boosted efficiently through the effective integration of SMU into their IC practices which cultivates a deeper connection between the employee and employer (Singh et al., 2024).

The relationship between all the variables is positive, and so the study presents that the SMU, EB, and IC can bolster EL if these strategic practices are efficiently implemented in the educational institutes. The significant positive relationship between SMU and IC Suggested that educational institutes can utilize social media to enhance the IC between the employees across different hieratical levels and departments (Andrias et al., 2025b). such information accessibility can support a smooth and connected environment (Putro, 2022). These findings remain consistent with communication visibility theory. Greater visibility of organizational interactions and knowledge flow can keep employees informed and connected (Engelbrecht et al., 2019). Similarly, the findings of the study also shows that the positive relationship between EB and IC can be used to establish a stronger employer brand image (Rys, Schollaert, & Van Hoyer, 2024) also an efficiently established employer brand may also contribute to a more effective communicational environment (Boiaryn, 2026) in the existing literature it is observed that when institutional values, expectations, and practices are communicated clearly and consistently, employees may develop a stronger understanding of what the organization represents and what it offers as an employer, and this can only happen when IC it efficient and effective thus EB treats effective IC as an essential practice (Ljajić & Pirs, 2021). The notion is strongly supported by the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (R. Zhang et al., 2022), which suggests that clear and supportive communication can also be perceived as a positive organizational investment, encouraging employees to develop more favorable attitudes toward the organization in return. Following, the finding to this study highlighted the significance of IC in fostering EL (Joshi, 2025; R. Zhang et al., 2022). Emphasizing the need for the educational institutes to focus on prioritizing on implementation of effective communication strategies for better engagement and employee satisfaction bolstering EL (Alshairi et al., 2025). highlighting IC's central role in fostering employee attachment to their institutions. This emphasizes on the important of IC and the need for the educational institutes to adopt and implement a robust IC practice which aligns with the institutional policies and goals resulting in enhanced EL and the overall institutional outcomes (Astarina & Sastra, 2026). Again, this notion is supported by the social exchange theory perspective (Tan et al., 2020) that effective communication can be viewed as a form of organizational support that employees may reciprocate through more positive attitudes and stronger loyalty toward their employer (Einwiller et al., 2021). This may also explain why IC emerged as the strongest predictor of EL and subsequently served as an important mechanism through which both SMU and EB contributed to EL (Lee et al., 2026; Men & Stacks, 2014; Verčič et al., 2023). Thus, the mediation analysis results further strengthen the notion and provides insights into how essential the role of IC is as a mediating variable between the relationship of the three constructs. Additionally, it shows that IC partially mediates both relationships, indicating that its role extends beyond being merely another predictor of EL. Specifically, SMU had a significant indirect effect on EL through IC ($\beta =$

0.065, $p = 0.008$), while its direct effect on EL remained positive but weak in magnitude. Similarly, the indirect effect of EB on EL through IC was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.099$, $p = 0.002$), alongside a significant direct effect of EB on EL. The indirect effect of both constructs was enhanced via mediation of IC. Although, the indirect effect of EB through IC was stronger than that of SMU. Overall, the partial mediation results reinforce the central position of IC within the proposed model and suggest that strengthening IC can enhance the contribution of both SMU and EB toward fostering EL.

As a whole, the findings suggest that EL within educational institutions is not shaped by a sole organizational practice but rather by the joint influence of different strategic organizational practices and tools, in case of this particular study a combination of SMU, EB, and IC. While the outcomes substantiate that each of these constructs contributes to EL, their effects vary in magnitude and operate through different pathways.

Conclusion

In short, the study reached the conclusion that fostering a strong interconnected climate bound by multifaceted strategic organizational practice is crucial in any type of origination be it an educational institute in a developing region. Various strategic practices drive institutional effectiveness. Thus, the study examined few of the known practices, it examined the influence of SMU and EB on EL through the mediating role of IC within educational institutions in Quetta. Overall, the result support all the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships in the study, all the relationships were significant, although their magnitude varied across constructs. The study showed that the EB and SMU had a positive impact on IC and EL. Though the effect of SMU was comparatively weak despite being positive in nature, whereas EB had a stronger effect on IC. The same was observed for the direct effect of SMU and EB on EL, where both SMU and EB showed positive relationships, but EB demonstrated a stronger effect compared with SMU.

As for the IC its direct effect was both significant and positive on EL but the more critical finding was its mediating role in this study. As the results demonstrated that the SMU and EB had a significant indirect effect on EL when mediated through IC which was stronger than the demonstrated individual direct effects. These results underscored the importance of strategic deployment of organizational practice in a cohesive manner to enhance institutional performance and employee engagement within educational settings. The study suggests that institutes should SMU, EB, and IC as interconnected elements of a broader strategic approach rather than treating them as separate and solitary practices. Institutions should adopt a holistic approach and utilize a more integrated approach.

The findings of this study are even more relevant for the educational institutions in the developing regions like Quetta where retaining capable employees is more difficult due to the different socio-economic factors, yet it remains a necessary factor for the institutional continuity and long-term sustainability. the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how interconnected strategic practices can enhance employee engagement and institutional sustainability, particularly in challenging environments like Quetta. Educational institutions can implement innovative strategies using different combinations of SMU, EB and IC that foster a supportive environment, promoting employee retention and engagement over all stimulating EL.

Also, the modest explanatory power of the model suggests that EL is influenced by the organizational and contextual factors beyond those examined in this study. Future research may therefore extend the model by incorporating additional predictors and testing the proposed relationships across different sectors, regions, and institutional contexts.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the contributions of this study, there are several distinguishable limitations that should be acknowledged. First the study is cross-sectional and so it cannot assess the longitudinal effects of the model. Future research can utilize a longitudinal design to better assess the dynamic effect of the relationship between the variable and there effect on the EL overtime. Also, the theoretical model of this study is rather simple. Although the model demonstrated predictive relevance, it explained 22.2% of the variance in internal communication and 27.4% of the variance in employee loyalty. Future study can extend the proposed framework by examining additional organizational and contextual factors that may explain EL beyond SMU, EB, and IC Such extensions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of EL across different institutional and regional settings. Pulse it can further explore how individual dimensions would affect the model.

Second the sampling technique utilized in this study might limit the generalizability of the findings thus the future studies could tackle this shortcoming and use a probability-based sampling and larger samples to improve representativeness and provide stronger grounds for generalization.

Third, the study was conducted specifically within educational institutions in Quetta. The findings may not be directly transferable to other cities, regions, or organizational sectors where working conditions, communication practices, and employee expectations may differ. Future research could replicate the model across different cities, regions, and sectors.

Fourth, the data collection relied on a quantitative approach, self-reported questionnaire responses, which, despite all efforts to reduce the potential for common method bias, including respondent anonymity and clear item design, the possibility of subjective response effects cannot be completely excluded. Thus, future studies should incorporate multiple data sources, such as organizational records or supervisor assessments, to strengthen the findings or use a qualitative research method to gather a diverse and distinct data set.

In short, while this study provides valuable insights into the mechanisms linking social media usage, employer branding, and internal communication to employee loyalty, addressing these limitations and exploring these additional avenues could allow future research to generate deeper, more nuanced, and generalizable findings that can inform policy and practice across diverse educational and organizational contexts.

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Appendix

Appendix-A

Collinearity Statistics (VIF) inner model-list

	VIF
EB -> EL	1.41
EB -> IC	1.269
IC -> EL	1.286
SMU -> EL	1.33
SMU -> IC	1.269

Cronbach's Alpha for the pilot study reliability and validity

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Usage	5	0.815
Employer Branding	5	0.816
Internal Communication	5	0.880
Employee Loyalty	5	0.895

Appendix-B

A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models

This calculator will compute the sample size required for a study that uses a structural equation model (SEM), given the number of observed and latent variables in the model, the anticipated effect size, and the desired probability and statistical power levels. The calculator will return both the minimum sample size required to detect the specified effect, and the minimum sample size required given the structural complexity of the model.

Please enter the necessary parameter values, and then click 'Calculate'.

Anticipated effect size: ?
 Desired statistical power level: ?
 Number of latent variables: ?
 Number of observed variables: ?
 Probability level: ?

Minimum sample size to detect effect: 137
 Minimum sample size for model structure: 100
 Recommended minimum sample size: 137

Appendix-C**Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	109	45%
Female	133	55%
Total	242	100%

Years of Experience of Respondents

Experience Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	17	7%
1–5 years	38	15.7%
6–10 years	30	12.4%
11–15 years	89	36.8%
More than 15 years	68	28.1%
Total	242	100%

Employee Category of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Staff	150	62%
Support/Technical	32	13.2%
Management	25	10.3%
Other Staff	20	8.3%
Administrative Staff	15	6.2%
Total	242	100%

Appendix-D**Outer Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity**

	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	(AVE)
Social Media Usage		0.763	0.774	0.84	0.515
SMU1	0.749				
SMU2	0.753				
SMU3	0.583				
SMU4	0.727				
SMU5	0.76				
Employer Branding		0.795	0.806	0.859	0.55
EB1	0.736				
EB2	0.796				
EB3	0.797				
EB4	0.716				
EB5	0.655				
Internal Communication		0.814	0.822	0.87	0.574
IC1	0.782				
IC2	0.769				
IC3	0.824				
IC4	0.677				
IC5	0.728				

Employee Loyalty		0.771	0.817	0.846	0.532
EL1	0.844				
EL2	0.852				
EL3	0.718				
EL4	0.503				
EL5	0.671				

Appendix-E

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) matrix

	EB	EL	IC	SMU
EB				
EL	0.509			
IC	0.521	0.558		
SMU	0.591	0.448	0.449	

Fornell-Lacker criterion

	EB	EL	IC	SMU
EB	0.742			
EL	0.417	0.729		
IC	0.431	0.446	0.758	
SMU	0.461	0.348	0.369	0.718



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