

Accreditation, Motivation and Institutional Performance: Exploring The Mediating Factors in Higher Education in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study investigates the multifaceted relationship between accreditation, motivation, and institutional performance within higher education. Specifically, it aims to examine both the direct influence of accreditation on motivation and higher education performance, as well as the effect of motivation on institutional outcomes. In addition, the study explores the mediating role of motivation in linking accreditation to higher education performance. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from administrative leaders across 105 universities in Pakistan using a combination of face-to-face and online survey techniques. The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that accreditation significantly enhances both motivation and institutional performance, while motivation itself exerts a strong positive influence on performance outcomes. Furthermore, the results confirm that motivation acts as a meaningful mediator, strengthening the relationship between accreditation and higher education performance. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the interconnected effects of accreditation and motivation, while also advancing theoretical understanding through the integration of motivation as a mediating construct. The findings offer practical implications for policymakers, institutional leaders, and quality assurance professionals, emphasizing the importance of fostering faculty motivation to ensure effective implementation of accreditation standards. Additionally, strengthening institutional performance across teaching, research, and service dimensions can enable universities to achieve balanced and sustainable excellence.

Keywords: Accreditation, motivation, higher education performance, mediation, university administration

Introduction

In the contemporary knowledge-driven era, higher education institutions are confronted with the complex task of achieving organizational effectiveness while simultaneously meeting the expectations of diverse stakeholders. Balancing these demands often places institutional leaders in a challenging position, requiring the adoption of adaptive and

forward-looking strategies. Among these, accreditation has emerged as a critical mechanism for enhancing institutional quality and accountability.

Accreditation is widely recognized as a structured process through which academic programs and institutions are evaluated against established quality standards. It serves not only as a tool for quality assurance but also as a means of strengthening institutional credibility, improving student enrollment, enhancing graduate employability, and fostering research and innovation. As global competition intensifies, accreditation has become increasingly important in positioning universities within international academic landscapes. Despite its recognized importance, empirical findings on the impact of accreditation remain inconclusive. While several studies highlight its positive contributions to institutional development and academic quality, others report limited or even adverse effects on teaching effectiveness and overall institutional performance Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024). A notable limitation within the existing literature is the predominance of qualitative approaches, which restricts the availability of robust empirical evidence regarding the direct and indirect effects of accreditation on higher education performance.

Importantly, accreditation alone is insufficient to generate meaningful improvements unless it is accompanied by a motivated academic workforce. Faculty motivation plays a central role in determining how effectively accreditation standards are implemented. Motivated educators are more likely to engage in innovative teaching practices, contribute to institutional development, and enhance student learning outcomes. Conversely, low levels of motivation can lead to reduced productivity, diminished teaching quality, and weakened institutional performance.

Existing research has examined motivation in various roles, including as a mediating variable; however, findings remain inconsistent and often reveal methodological limitations. This highlights the need for further empirical investigation into how motivation interacts with accreditation to influence institutional outcomes.

The context of Pakistan provides a particularly relevant setting for this inquiry. Higher education institutions in the country continue to face criticism regarding their performance and global competitiveness. This is reflected in international rankings, where only a limited number of Pakistani universities are represented among leading global institutions. Concerns regarding academic quality, particularly in teaching, research, and service functions, have been consistently highlighted in both scholarly and policy discussions.

Higher education institutions are traditionally expected to fulfill three core missions: the delivery of high-quality teaching, the production of impactful research, and the provision of meaningful service to society. However Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024), evidence suggests that Pakistani universities face significant challenges across all three dimensions, limiting their overall effectiveness and global standing.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address critical gaps in the literature by examining the relationships among accreditation, motivation, and higher education performance. Specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the effect of accreditation on motivation and higher education performance in universities?

RQ2: How does motivation influence higher education performance?

RQ3: Does motivation mediate the relationship between accreditation and higher education performance?

To address these questions, the study follows a structured approach. It begins with a comprehensive review of the literature and the development of hypotheses, followed by a detailed explanation of the research methodology, including sampling and measurement procedures. The subsequent sections present the empirical findings and their interpretation, culminating in conclusions and practical recommendations.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Higher Education Performance

The notion of organizational performance within higher education remains conceptually fragmented, with no universally accepted framework for its measurement. Scholars have approached this construction from diverse perspectives. Some emphasize financial indicators such as revenue generation and resource efficiency, while others prioritize non-financial dimensions, including innovation capacity Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024), research productivity, governance effectiveness, service delivery, and international engagement.

More recent scholarly efforts have attempted to consolidate these perspectives by identifying key domains that capture university performance at a global level. Among these, three dimensions consistently emerge as central: teaching, research, and service. These domains not only reflect the traditional missions of higher education institutions but also serve as critical benchmarks for evaluating institutional effectiveness.

In the context of Pakistan, these three performance areas present significant challenges.

Teaching performance encompasses the effectiveness of instructional delivery and the achievement of learning objectives. However, multiple structural and systemic issues undermine teaching quality in Pakistani universities Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024). These include outdated curricula, limited exposure to contemporary knowledge, ineffective pedagogical approaches, weak assessment systems, and politicized faculty recruitment practices. Additional concerns, such as student discipline issues, academic misconduct, reduced instructional time, and a shortage of highly qualified faculty, further compound the problem.

Research performance, defined as the production and dissemination of scholarly knowledge, represents another area of concern. Universities in Pakistan face persistent barriers such as inadequate research culture, weak evaluation mechanisms, limited research skills, and the prevalence of low-quality or predatory publications. Furthermore, the imbalance between teaching responsibilities and research expectations restricts faculty engagement in meaningful scholarly activities.

Service performance, often described as the “third mission” of universities, refers to their

contribution to society beyond teaching and research. This includes community engagement, policy input, and knowledge transfer Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024). In Pakistan, service performance remains underdeveloped, partly due to the complexity of managing diverse stakeholder expectations and the absence of structured mechanisms for societal engagement.

Given these challenges, this study conceptualizes higher education performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing teaching, research, and service outcomes.

Accreditation and Higher Education Performance

Accreditation is widely understood as a formal evaluation process through which an external body assesses whether an institution or academic program meets established quality standards. It serves as a mechanism for ensuring accountability, enhancing credibility, and promoting continuous improvement within higher education systems.

A substantial body of literature suggests that accreditation contributes positively to institutional performance. It has been linked to improvements in teaching quality, administrative effectiveness, academic standards, and research productivity. By enforcing structured guidelines and quality benchmarks, accreditation encourages institutions to align their operations with recognized best practices.

However, empirical findings are not uniformly consistent. Some studies indicate that accreditation processes yield only partial benefits or fail to significantly influence key aspects such as curriculum quality, faculty development, and infrastructure. In certain cases, accreditation has been criticized for promoting procedural compliance rather than substantive improvement.

The inconsistency in prior findings, combined with the limited availability of robust quantitative evidence, highlights the need for further empirical investigation. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Accreditation is significantly associated with higher education performance.

Accreditation and Motivation

While accreditation frameworks provide structural direction, their effectiveness largely depends on the willingness and engagement of academic staff. Faculty motivation plays a pivotal role in determining whether accreditation standards are meaningfully implemented or merely followed at a superficial level.

Existing studies suggest that accreditation processes can enhance motivation by improving institutional reputation, fostering professional recognition, and creating opportunities for development Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024). At the same time, accreditation can also be perceived as an additional administrative burden, particularly when faculty members are not actively involved in decision-making processes or

when the value of accreditation is not clearly communicated.

Research highlights that engaging faculty members in accreditation activities and recognizing their contributions can significantly improve motivation levels. Conversely, a lack of involvement and appreciation may lead to resistance, reducing the effectiveness of accreditation initiatives.

Despite its importance, empirical evidence examining the relationship between accreditation and motivation remains limited. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Accreditation is significantly associated with motivation.

Motivation and Higher Education Performance

Motivation, derived from the concept of movement or action, represents a driving force that directs individual behavior toward achieving specific goals. Within organizational settings, motivation plays a critical role in shaping employee performance, engagement, and overall productivity.

Motivation can be broadly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic forms. Intrinsic motivation originates from internal satisfaction and personal interest in the task, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as recognition, compensation, or career advancement.

In higher education, motivated faculty members are more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods, engage in research activities, and contribute to institutional development. However, empirical findings on the relationship between motivation and performance are mixed Khan, M. S., Ali, (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024); Pathan, M. S. K. (2024). Some studies highlight a strong positive relationship, while others suggest that the type and context of motivation significantly influence outcomes.

Given the limited and inconsistent evidence, particularly within the educational sector, further investigation is warranted. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Motivation is significantly associated with higher education performance.

The Mediating Role of Motivation

Motivation has been widely examined as a mediating variable in organizational research, although findings remain inconclusive. Some studies report no mediating effect, while others confirm its significance in linking various organizational factors to performance outcomes.

In educational contexts, motivation has been shown to mediate relationships between organizational practices and employee outcomes, including retention, training effectiveness, and job satisfaction Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). These findings suggest that motivation can serve as a critical

mechanism through which institutional initiatives influence performance.

Despite this, there is a notable lack of empirical research exploring the mediating role of motivation in the relationship between accreditation and higher education performance. Addressing this gap, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Accreditation has an indirect effect on higher education performance through motivation.

Research Framework

To integrate the proposed relationships, this study adopts Resource-Based View (RBV) as its theoretical foundation. RBV posits that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by effectively utilizing internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable.

Within the context of higher education, faculty motivation can be viewed as a strategic internal resource. When effectively harnessed, it enables institutions to implement accreditation standards more efficiently and translate them into improved performance outcomes.

Based on this theoretical perspective, the conceptual framework of the study consists of three key variables:

Accreditation as the independent (predictor) variable

Motivation as the mediating variable

Higher Education Performance as the dependent (outcome) variable

This framework provides a structured basis for examining how accreditation influences institutional performance both directly and indirectly through the motivational dynamics of academic staff.

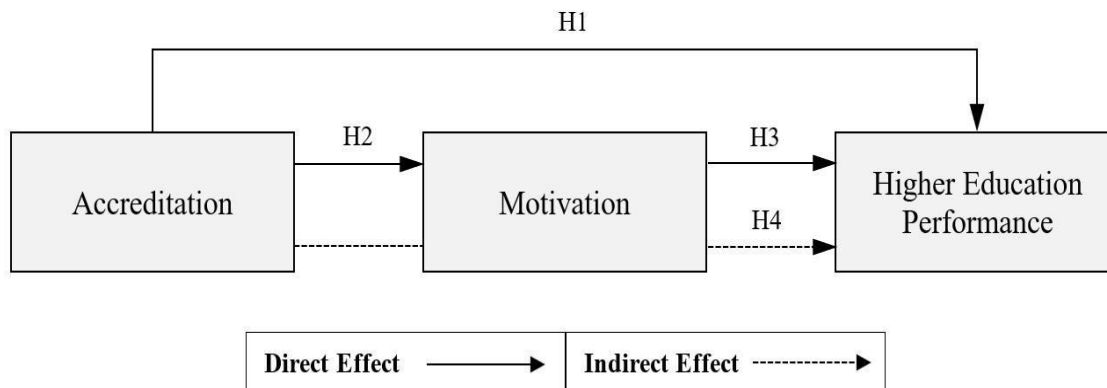


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

This study employed a quantitative survey-based design to investigate the proposed relationships among accreditation, motivation, and higher education performance. The population consisted of 226 recognized universities across Pakistan, with the institution serving as the primary unit of analysis Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). To ensure informed and reliable responses, data were collected from senior administrative personnel, including Vice Chancellors, Deans, Directors, and Heads of Departments, who possess comprehensive knowledge of institutional processes and performance dynamics.

The required sample size was determined using the widely accepted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling framework, resulting in a target of 144 institutions. Data collection was conducted through a combination of online survey distribution and in-person visits to enhance participation and data reliability. In total, 150 questionnaires were disseminated, out of which 111 responses were received. After careful screening for completeness and consistency, 105 responses were deemed valid and suitable for analysis, yielding an effective response rate of 70%.

Given that the organization was the unit of analysis, only one respondent per institution was selected. This approach ensured that responses reflected an institutional perspective rather than individual-level variation, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings.

Measures

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The instrument was developed by adapting established measurement scales from prior studies, ensuring both conceptual relevance and empirical rigor.

Before full-scale data collection, a pre-testing phase was conducted to refine the questionnaire and minimize potential ambiguities. The initial instrument was evaluated by a panel of six experts, including senior academics, quality assurance directors from leading universities, and a highly experienced quality management specialist with over three decades of expertise in Total Quality Management (TQM) practices Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). Based on their feedback, several items were revised to improve clarity, coherence, and contextual suitability.

The final questionnaire comprised two main sections. The first section included nine items capturing demographic and institutional characteristics. The second section consisted of 48 items measuring the study’s core constructs: accreditation, motivation, and higher education performance.

Accreditation was measured using five items adapted from established literature.

Motivation was assessed through eighteen items capturing both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions.

Higher education performance was operationalized as a multidimensional construct with twenty-five items, encompassing:

- **Teaching performance (5 items)**
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- **Research performance (5 items)**
- **Service performance (15 items)**

All measurement scales were selected and adapted to ensure alignment with the higher education context and the objectives of the study.

Participants' Profile

The sample reflects a diverse representation of higher education institutions across Pakistan. Among the participating universities, 59 institutions (56.2%) belong to the public sector, while 46 institutions (43.8%) represent the private sector.

Geographically, the distribution of participating institutions spans all major regions of the country. The largest proportion originates from Punjab (34.3%), followed by Sindh (21.9%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (19%), and Islamabad (16.2%). Smaller representations were observed from Balochistan (4.8%), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (2.9%), and Gilgit-Baltistan (1%).

In terms of gender distribution, the majority of respondents were male (77.1%), while female respondents accounted for 22.9% of the sample. Regarding professional roles, most participants held the position of Head of Department (63.8%), followed by Deans (16.2%) and Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Directors (12.4%). The remaining respondents were distributed across other senior administrative roles.

This diverse sample composition enhances the generalizability of the study's findings and provides a comprehensive institutional perspective on accreditation practices, motivational dynamics, and performance outcomes within Pakistan's higher education sector.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Items		Frequency	Percentage
Sector	Public Sector	59	56.2
	Private Sector	46	43.8
Province	Azad Jammu Kashmir	3	2.9
	Balochistan	5	4.8
	Gilgit Baltistan	1	1.0
	Islamabad	17	16.2
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	20	19.0
	Punjab	36	34.3
	Sindh	23	21.9
Gender	Male	81	77.1
	Female	24	22.9
Designation	VC	4	3.8
	Dean	17	16.2
	Director QEC	13	12.4
	Director ORIC	2	1.9
	HOD	67	63.8
	Other	2	1.9

Advanced Statistical Analysis and Empirical Findings: A Robust PLS-SEM Approach for Validating the Research Model

The present study applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4 to examine the proposed conceptual relationships and validate the empirical model. This analytical technique was selected because of its strong suitability for complex predictive models, comparatively smaller sample sizes, non-normal data distributions, and its effectiveness in estimating latent constructs through variance-based structural modeling (Hair et al., 2019) Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). In contemporary social science and management research, PLS-SEM is widely recognized as a reliable and flexible approach for testing multidimensional relationships among observed and unobserved variables.

Before proceeding with the main statistical analysis, rigorous diagnostic procedures were conducted to ensure the integrity and reliability of the dataset. In particular, the study assessed the possibility of Common Method Bias (CMB), as reliance on self-reported and single-source data may create systematic measurement error if not properly examined (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Addressing this issue at the preliminary stage was essential to enhancing the credibility of the empirical findings.

As an initial diagnostic step, Harman's Single-Factor Test was employed to determine whether a single latent factor accounted for the majority of covariance among the measurement items. The results indicated that the first factor explained 40.84% of the total variance, which remains below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. This outcome suggests that no dominant single factor was present and that common method variance was not a serious concern in the collected data.

To further strengthen the assessment, a Full Collinearity Test was also conducted. This procedure evaluates variance inflation factor (VIF) values across all latent constructs to identify potential collinearity issues that may also signal common method bias. The VIF values obtained (refer to Table 2) were all below the recommended cut-off level of 3.3, as suggested by Kock (2015) Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). These results confirm the absence of problematic multicollinearity and provide additional evidence that common method bias did not materially influence the study measures.

Taken together, both diagnostic procedures provide strong statistical support for the quality of the dataset. The findings indicate that the data are free from serious common method concerns, thereby allowing the subsequent structural model analysis to be interpreted with greater confidence, precision, and validity. Consequently, the empirical results generated through SmartPLS 4 can be considered robust, dependable, and suitable for hypothesis testing and theoretical interpretation.

Table 2. Full-Collinearity Test Results

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variables	Tolerance	VIF
ACC	MOT	0.519	1.927
	HEP	0.519	1.927

MOT	ACC	0.577	1.733
	HEP	0.577	1.733
HEP	ACC	0.686	1.457
	MOT	0.686	1.457

Abbreviations: ACC, accreditation; MOT, motivation; HEP, higher education performance.

Measurement Model Assessment: Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Construct Precision

The measurement model was rigorously evaluated to ensure the adequacy, consistency, and validity of the study constructs before testing the structural relationships. As a first step, the outer loadings of all measurement indicators were carefully examined to assess their contribution to the respective latent variables (Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023)). The results indicated that the majority of the items demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.600, confirming their acceptable representation of the intended constructs. However, a limited number of indicators—namely EMOT4, EMOT6, SP1, SP2, SP3, and SP15—displayed loadings below the minimum acceptable benchmark of 0.500. In accordance with established methodological recommendations (Hair et al., 2016), these weak-performing items were excluded from the final measurement model to improve construct clarity and overall model quality.

Following item purification, the internal consistency reliability of the constructs was examined using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Composite Reliability was particularly emphasized due to its stronger suitability for variance-based structural equation modeling and its more accurate estimation of latent variable reliability (McNeish, 2018). The obtained values for both Alpha and CR exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.700, indicating a high degree of consistency among the retained indicators and confirming that the measurement scales were reliable and stable Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023) (Wasko & Faraj, 2005).

To establish convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated for each construct. The AVE values for all latent variables were found to be greater than the accepted benchmark of 0.500, demonstrating that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its associated indicators. This confirms that the items strongly converge in measuring their intended underlying dimensions (Hair et al., 2014; 2016).

Overall, the results of the measurement model assessment confirm that the instrument possesses satisfactory psychometric properties. All required criteria relating to indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity (see Table 3) were achieved in line with established scholarly standards (Hair et al., 2014; 2017). Therefore, the measurement model can be considered statistically sound and appropriate for subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Item	Loading	Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE					
Accreditation (ACC)	ACC1	0.824	0.913	0.916	0.935	0.741					
	ACC2	0.877									
	ACC3	0.879									
	ACC4	0.834									
	ACC5	0.889									
Motivation (MOT)	IMOT1	0.695	0.704	0.778	0.867	0.766					
	IMOT2	0.830									
	IMOT3	0.851									
	IMOT4	0.746									
	IMOT5	0.794									
	IMOT6	0.817									
	IMOT7	0.747									
	IMOT8	0.751									
	IMOT9	0.761									
	EMOT1	0.692									
	EMOT2	0.750									
	EMOT3	0.709									
	EMOT5	0.698									
	EMOT7	0.666									
	EMOT8	0.768									
	EMOT9	0.695									
	Higher Education Performance (HEP)	TP1					0.680	0.859	0.865	0.914	0.779
		TP2					0.854				
		TP3					0.849				
TP4		0.835									
TP5-		0.854									
RP1		0.848									
RP2		0.868									
RP3		0.902									
RP4		0.812									
RP5		0.887									
SP4		0.783									
SP5	0.803										
SP6	0.843										
SP7	0.851										
SP8	0.809										
SP9	0.660										
SP10	0.812										
SP11	0.838										

	SP12-	0.850				
	SP13	0.828				
	SP14	0.810				

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CR, composite reliability.

Besides, discriminant validity was assessed using the “Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio” (HTMT), which is “the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards” (Hair et al., 2017). The resulting HTMT ratio for all variables (Table 4) was below the upper limit of 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001; Teo et al., 2008), it was also found acceptable.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity - (HTMT)

	ACC	MOT	HEP
ACC			
MOT	0.668		
HEP	0.757	0.875	

Abbreviations: ACC, accreditation; MOT, motivation; HEP, higher education performance.

Structural Model

Structural Model Evaluation: Hypothesis Testing and Validation of Direct Relationships

The structural model (Figure 2) was systematically assessed to examine the proposed causal relationships among the key constructs of the study and to determine the explanatory strength of the conceptual framework. Using the PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure, the path coefficients, t-statistics, and significance levels were analyzed to test the direct hypotheses formulated in the research model. The first three hypotheses (H1 to H3) focused specifically on the direct effects among accreditation, motivation, and higher education performance.

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that accreditation has a direct and positive relationship with higher education performance. The empirical findings strongly supported this assumption, revealing a statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = 4.896$, $p = 0.000$). This result indicates that stronger accreditation practices and quality assurance mechanisms contribute meaningfully to improved institutional performance in higher education settings.

The second hypothesis (H2) examined whether accreditation is directly associated with motivation. The analysis confirmed a highly significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.560$, $t = 8.750$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that effective accreditation systems not only enhance compliance and academic standards but also serve as an important motivational driver for academic and administrative stakeholders by promoting recognition, accountability, and professional engagement.

The third hypothesis (H3) tested the relationship between motivation and higher education performance. The results demonstrated a statistically significant and positive effect ($\beta = 0.470$, $t = 6.541$, $p = 0.000$) Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023), confirming that increased motivation among relevant stakeholders positively influences institutional outcomes and overall educational performance.

Collectively, the findings provide robust empirical support for all three direct hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3). These results validate the theoretical assumptions of the study and highlight the interconnected role of accreditation and motivation in strengthening higher education performance. A summarized presentation of the direct path results is provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Direct Relationship Results

	Relationship	β	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	ACC -> HEP	0.409	0.084	4.896	0.000	Supported
H2	ACC -> MOT	0.560	0.064	8.750	0.000	Supported
H3	MOT -> HEP	0.470	0.072	6.541	0.000	Supported

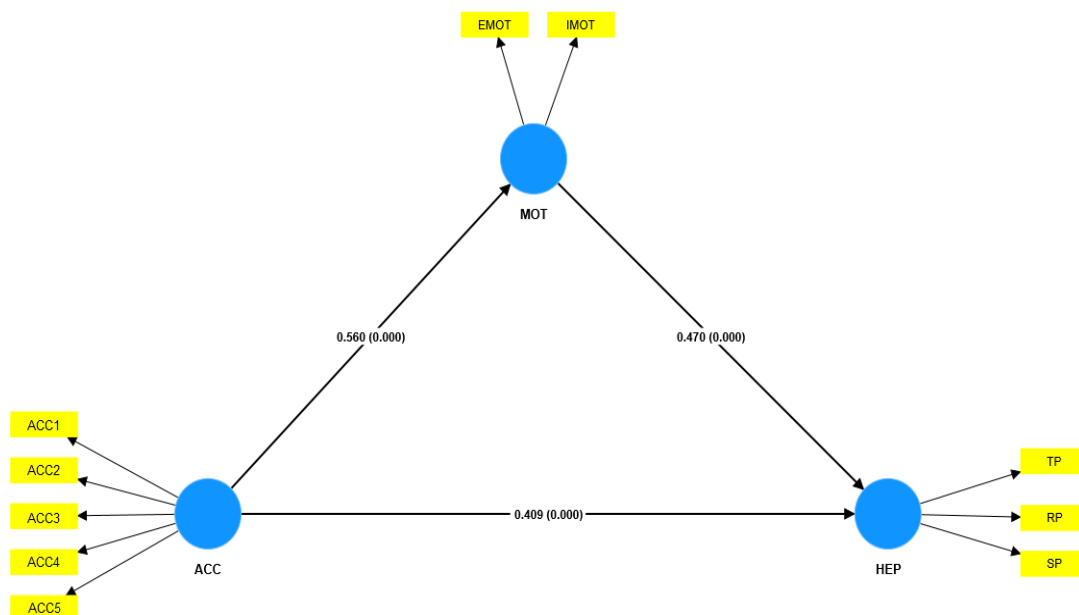


Figure 2. Structural Model

Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis (H4) assesses whether accreditation has an indirect effect on higher education performance through motivation, and the results (Table 6) also confirmed its significance ($\beta = 0.263$, $t = 5.020$, $p = 0.000$). Thus, H4 was also found to be supported, meaning that the mediating effect of motivation in relation to accreditation and higher education performance is empirically validated.

Table 6. Indirect Relationship Results

	Relationship	β	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
H4	ACC -> MOT -> HEP	0.263	0.052	5.020	0.000	Supported

Discussion

This study provides strong empirical support for all proposed direct and indirect relationships between accreditation and higher education performance through the mediating role of motivation, grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. According to RBV, the long-term competitiveness and performance of institutions are largely determined by their valuable internal resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). In the context of higher education, accreditation can be interpreted as a strategic intangible resource that enhances institutional credibility, strengthens governance systems, and promotes sustainable performance outcomes.

The findings of the present research confirm that accreditation exerts a meaningful and positive influence on higher education performance. Accreditation serves multiple strategic purposes, including ensuring compliance with recognized standards, enhancing transparency and accountability, improving educational quality, and facilitating academic mobility for students and faculty (Sanyal & Martin, 2007). In an era marked by increasing competition, global rankings, quality pressures, and stakeholder expectations, accreditation emerges as a critical mechanism through which higher education institutions can improve operational effectiveness and gain a competitive advantage.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that highlight the positive role of accreditation in enhancing teaching and learning processes (Makhoul, 2019; Nguyen & Ta, 2017), improving university management practices (Nguyen & Ta, 2017), strengthening academic quality and institutional excellence (Chang et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2020; Ulker & Bakioglu, 2018), and advancing research productivity (Ke et al., 2016). However, while earlier studies have explored specific functional benefits of accreditation, limited empirical attention has been given to its broader relationship with overall higher education performance. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by empirically validating both the direct and indirect effects of accreditation on institutional performance within the university sector.

In addition, the study reveals that motivation is a significant driver of higher education performance. Motivated academic and administrative personnel are more likely to

demonstrate commitment, productivity, innovation, and service excellence. Prior research has similarly reported the positive effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on research productivity (Horodnic & Zait, 2015), as well as the influence of external factors on teacher motivation (Rasheed et al., 2016). These findings suggest that when employees across all organizational levels remain engaged and motivated, universities are better positioned to achieve superior academic and managerial outcomes.

The study also establishes a significant positive association between accreditation and motivation. Accreditation processes often create opportunities for recognition, professional development, institutional prestige, and quality improvement, all of which can enhance staff morale and engagement. Earlier research has shown that motivation is essential for encouraging staff participation in accreditation initiatives, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as healthcare (Greenfield et al., 2011). Similarly, evidence suggests that although accreditation may sometimes be viewed as an additional administrative burden, it becomes positively accepted when faculty members perceive it as a meaningful acknowledgment of their professional contributions (Hail et al., 2019) Pathan, M. S. K. (2025); Pathan, M. S. K. (2021); Pathan, M. S. (2022); Pathan, M. S. K. (2023). This indicates that accreditation can activate intrinsic motivation when linked with fairness, recognition, and academic value.

A particularly important contribution of this study is the empirical confirmation of the mediating role of motivation in the relationship between accreditation and higher education performance. This finding demonstrates that accreditation not only influences institutional outcomes directly but also improves performance indirectly by stimulating motivation among stakeholders. Similar mediating effects of motivation have been identified in prior studies involving staff retention, training transfer, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Mata et al., 2021; Gautam & Basnet, 2021; Akosile & Ekemen, 2022). However, to the best of current knowledge, no previous study has specifically examined motivation as a mediator between accreditation and higher education performance. Accordingly, this research makes a novel theoretical and empirical contribution by introducing and validating this mechanism in the university context.

Conclusion and Strategic Recommendations

The overall findings of this study may be categorized into direct and indirect effects of accreditation. First, the research empirically confirms that accreditation positively influences both higher education performance and staff motivation. It also validates that motivation significantly enhances institutional performance. Second, the study confirms that accreditation indirectly improves higher education performance through the motivational pathway.

These results suggest that both accreditation and motivation should be viewed as valuable strategic resources for universities. Institutions seeking sustainable performance improvement should not treat accreditation merely as a compliance exercise; rather, it should be integrated into a broader performance strategy that simultaneously enhances faculty and staff motivation. Universities that motivate their academic workforce are more likely to implement accreditation standards effectively and achieve long-term quality excellence.

This study offers several important contributions to the literature. It advances scholarly

understanding by empirically examining the relationship between accreditation, motivation, and higher education performance, while also extending RBV theory into the higher education setting. The introduction of motivation as a mediating construct further enriches the conceptual framework of quality assurance research.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful guidance for policymakers, university leaders, quality assurance managers, and accreditation bodies. Institutional leaders should create supportive environments where accreditation efforts are linked with recognition systems, professional growth opportunities, and participatory decision-making. Furthermore, because higher education performance in this study was conceptualized through the dimensions of teaching, research, and service, administrators should ensure balanced attention to all three institutional missions rather than prioritizing one at the expense of others.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. First, the research employed a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point in time, which limits causal interpretation. Second, the unit of analysis was the institution, and therefore only one administrative respondent represented each university. Third, because the survey was conducted nationally, a combination of physical and online data collection methods was used, resulting in a relatively modest sample size.

Directions for Future Research

Future researchers are encouraged to replicate and extend this model using larger and more diverse samples to improve generalizability. Longitudinal research designs may also provide stronger insights into causal relationships over time. Additionally, future studies may incorporate other influential predictors or mediators such as leadership styles, innovation climate, organizational culture, and digital transformation capabilities in relation to higher education performance.

Finally, since the present study primarily reflects the perceptions of administrators, future investigations should include broader stakeholder perspectives, particularly those of faculty members, students, and external quality experts, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of institutional performance and accreditation effectiveness.

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