

Applying Partial Least Squares Approach to investigate the Moderating effect of Peer Support on Employee Commitment.

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Abstract

In order to understand the challenges faced by higher education institute (HEI's) in Pakistan, the HEI's attempts to determine factors that impact on the commitment of employees. The objectives of this research, based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET), is to enrich this understanding by analyzing the buffering effect of peer support in the link between training and development (T&D), Working Climate (WC), and employee commitment (EC) in Pakistan's public sector higher education institutions. Using a proportionate-stratified random sampling process, a quantitative approach was advocated, with a survey as the strategy of inquiry from 385 respondents. The study shows that T&D and WC have a substantial association with EC in government sector universities, both theoretically and empirically. Furthermore, the findings support the hypothesis that peer support buffers the link between T&D, WC, and EC. The introduction of peer support as a moderator between the T&D, WC, and employee commitment relationships is the key contribution. The research also helps to better understand the dynamics of work engagement in higher education institutions, with a focus on the buffering function of peer support (PS) in the Pakistani setting.

Keywords: Training and Development, Working Climate, Peer support, employee Commitment, Social Exchange Theory.

Introduction

The HEI's sector plays a main role in the huge percentage of current marketplace in both developed and emerging economies. HEI's sector are critical to the whole educational system as well as economic growth (Ahmad, Bibi & Majid, 2017). In a competitive environment rife with competitive challenges, HEI's administrators recognize the importance of attracting and retaining highly motivated employees. Employees are an organization's most valuable asset. As a result, maintaining these employees is critical to the companies' success. Conversely, absence of EC is still a big concern for the education sector.

Faculty turnover has increased as a result of the increased demand for highly talented and skilled faculty (Abulkareem et al., 2015; Bibi, Pangil, Johari, & Ahmad, 2017, Ng'ethe et al., 2012). According to Blazer (2006), approximately 20% of academic members quit the profession after three years, and approximately 30% leave after five years. The retaining of highly dedicated workers is consequently a central and current problem in the education sector in Pakistan (Bibi, et al., 2017; Sial et al, 2011). In the view of these problems, management should consider and mitigate the high turnover of staff in their organisation. In a modern market climate, businesses rely mostly on human resources instead on monetary assets (Eskildersen & Nussler, 2000). The aim of the present study is to determine the factor influencing the EC. Therefore, the researcher wants to build a framework for HRM practices that enhances organisational commitment and coworker support as a requirement for accomplishing organisational goals. The literature study reveals that there is still much more research to be done in the topic of organisational commitment in Pakistan, particularly in public higher education institutions.

The goal of this study is to look into the relationship between T&D, WC, PS, and faculty members' commitment to government sector universities in Pakistan.

Problem Definition

In the view of these problems, management should consider and mitigate the high turnover of staff in their organisation. Prior research has been conducted on T&D, WC and employee commitment but the factors have still not been analyzed in education sector, in addition, it would also fill the void described in the literature. Most research has been conducted on these factors, but on various companies, and areas, whereas there is very little-known evidence from developing countries, especially Pakistan context. The main aim of this research is therefore to delve the moderating effect of PS on the connection between T&D, WC, and EC.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Employee commitment

Previous researcher Meyer and Allen, (1997) explains EC as "Commitment refers to emotional bond of employee with organization to accept prevalent values and goals". The value of engagement is increasing due to its effect on the performance of the employees and the decreases in job dissatisfaction. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2019) found that devoted academic professionals stay with the organisation longer and work harder on behalf of the institution. when employees receive assistance from their employers in the same way that they feel content and strive effectively for the company's benefit (Mossholder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005). This theory is often used as an organisational commitment to recognising the connection between workers and employers (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Notwithstanding the above-mentioned empirical research on EC, prior researchers like (Ahmad, Bibi & Majid, 2017; Ahmad, et al., 2015; Ahmad, Bibi & Majid, 2016) claimed that EC research remains constrained. As a result, this study was another attempt to investigate the relationship between T&D, WC, and EC among Pakistan's HELs.

T&D and Employee Commitment

This entails the level of training imparted to academics from their respective institutions in order to improve skills and performance (Delery & Doty, 1996). In rapid growing markets organization emphasize investments in T&D to secure a sustained competitive advantage (Bashir & Long, 2015). According to Ginsberg (1997), organization needs to design training according to required job. Likewise, adequate training program is a foremost tool of human resource management endeavors that affects organizational commitment as well as contributes to enhance the efficiency (Schuler & Macmillan, 1984; Ahmad, Bibi and Bilal, 2020) and helps refine employee skills and organizational goals (Ahmad, Bibi, & Majid, 2017; Ahmad, & Tayyah, 2016; Bibi et al., 2018; Tsai & Tai, 2003). In the same vein, a noteworthy relationship exists among training and employee commitment as highly trained workers are better equipped to carry out their activities better than untrained workforce (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). However, even though numerous literatures are available on training and development, but mostly these studies have been undertaken western cultures as against continental cultures. In Pakistan T&D requires immediate attention due to man strapped and resource strapped environment plagued by inefficiencies and low levels of motivation in HELs in public sector.

The literature study also revealed that prior researchers' findings, such as Lee et al. (2006), are controversial, claiming that there is no link between T&D and organisational commitment. Furthermore, a researcher also proclaims that due to organisational cultural differences, studies on training programs can differ from one firm to the next. Further research is needed to analyse the relationship between T&D and employee commitment in the Southeast Asian setting, particularly in the higher education institutions in Pakistan. As a result, the initial hypothesis of this investigation is:

Hypothesis (1)

There is positive and significant relationship between T&D and EC.

Working Climate and Employee Commitment

The atmosphere in which employees do their jobs is referred to as the working climate (Danish, Ramzan & Ahmad, 2013). It goes without saying that a pleasant working environment motivates personnel to attain corporate objectives. As a result, businesses should develop a working environment that encourages employees to be more committed. Work environment is defined by (Edgar & Geare, 2005; Mangi, Soomro, Ghumro, Abidi & Jalbani, 2011) as the individual's perception of the organization's everyday work environment, i.e., hygiene facilities and vicinity. Many more research, like Mangi, et al., (2011); Idrus et al. (2012) have demonstrated that organisational atmosphere has an important and favourable association with organisational commitment. Despite this, a thorough analysis of the literature reveals that the vast majority of organisational climate research has been undertaken in a variety of industries, with little attention paid to higher education, notably in Pakistan.

working climate was chosen as an independent variable because the current study focuses on employees' impressions of their work environment. Furthermore, research shows that a good work environment is particularly successful at enriching employee experience and work, helping them to achieve company objectives while also demonstrating great employee behaviour. The literature also suggests that a favourable work environment can foster a productive culture, allowing people to perform more with less. As a result, the second hypothesis is suggested as follows, based on a review of the literature on organisational atmosphere and commitment:

Hypothesis (2)

There is a positive and significant relationship between WC and EC.

Peer Support (Moderating Variable) and Employee Commitment

In each company, every single worker has colleagues who carry out their duties at the very equivalent position in the hierarchy. As a result, coworker support is critical in terms of employee dedication and job-related trends (Wainaina, Kipchumba & Kombo, 2014). Prior studies Ahmad, et al., (2016) believed that successful benefit of special peer support, including positive attitudes concerning work - related stress edicts, enhanced job performance, increased engagement, enhanced professional growth, encourage for work classmates and boost EC. Similarly, Ahmad, et al., 2017; Schneider, (1987); Wang, el al., 2008, explained that peer support is crucial and plays a key influence in improving EC, and has the potential to describe the social environment at work.

As a result of this research, PS appears to act as a moderator in the relationship between T&D, WC, and EC. Pertinently, it is also suggested by prior researchers like Ahmad et al, (2016); Bateman (2009) that it be useful for verify the buffering impact of PS, T&D, WC on EC. It is argued by Rousseau and Aubé, (2010) for example, that workers with peer support are more loyal to the company than those who do not have special peer assistance. The current review thus considered peer support to be a buffering variable and try to find to further evaluate its impact on T&D, WC and EC. This analysis as a result hypothesised as follows.

Hypothesis 3:

Peer support moderates the relationship between T&D, and EC.

Hypothesis 4:

Peer support moderates the relationship between WC and EC.

Research Methodology

Procedure & Participants

Measurement

Out of 700 questionnaires, total 385 survey questionnaires were collected from academic staff of the 16 public HEI's in KP, Pakistan. The survey involved measures of EC 9 items used by Mowday, et., (1979). Although T&D is operationalized as the routine training of academic workers to develop their skills while employed in public sector universities (Delery & Doty, 1996). The 4 items proposed by Delery & Doty, (1996) were used to measure T&D. To assess the working climate, Edgar and Geare (2005) recommended four items. To measure PS 10 items were used by (Ducharme & Martin, 2000) on 5-point Likert scale, which allow the responded to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

Results

For the purposes of this study, Smart PLS version 2.0 packages were used to do the analysis.

Convergent validity

Hair et al. (2010), suggests three forms of estimation to establish convergent validity: First comes factor loading, then average variance extraction (AVE), and finally composite reliability (CR). All of the elements in Table 1 loaded above 0.5, which is an acceptable and normal range, according to (Hair et al., 2010). As a result, a total of 08 indications (OC9, CS10, CS9, CS8, CS7, CS6, CS5, OCL1) were eliminated since their loading values were less than 0.5, and only 19 items out of 27 were kept. Table 1 further shows that, as predicted by Hair et al., (2010) composite reliability for practically all variables is better than 0.7, and the AVE above the 0.5 criteria.

Table 1. *Convergent Validity Analysis*

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Peer Support	CWS-1	0.863	0.752	0.899
	CWS-2	0.937		
	CWS-3	0.902		
	CWS-4	0.856		
Employee Commitment	OC-1	0.895	0.668	0.841
	OC-2	0.937		
	OC-3	0.898		
	OC-4	0.903		
	OC-5	0.644		
	OC-6	0.677		
	OC-7	0.698		

Working Climate	OC-8	0.827		
	OCL2	0.888	0.643	0.843
	OCL3	0.799		
	OCL4	0.708		
Training and Development	TD-1	0.934	0.865	0.962
	TD-2	0.915		
	TD-3	0.940		
	TD-4	0.929		

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity helps to verify construct validity and study associations between latent constructs, ensuring that measurements that should not be connected are examined using Fornell and Lacker's scale (1981). According to Fornell and Lacker's recommendations, the square root of AVE should be greater than the variation shared throughout the study's components (1981). Cross loading, which is performed by matching the outermost factor loading with the cross - loading, is another technique for dealing with discriminant validity (Hair, et al., 2013).

Table 2. The Square Root of AVE and the correlations of the latent variables

	PS	EC	WC	TD
Peer Support	0.890			
Employee Commitment	0.169	0.818		
Working Climate	0.252	0.221	0.802	
Training and Development	0.205	0.150	0.456	0.930

As seen in table 2, the diagonal values are better than the other values of the row and column in which they are put, confirming the discriminant validity of the outer model (Hair et al, 2010).

The next step was to look at the standardised path coefficients to see if they might be used to assess the study's postulated correlations. As a result, the Smart PLS programme employed the bootstrapping method to obtain the final results presented in Figure 1 and Table 3.

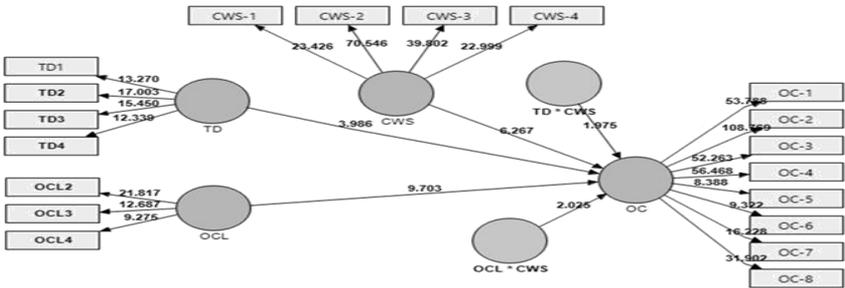


Figure 1 Structural Model with Moderator

Table 3. The result of Structural Model

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta (β)	S.E	t	P	Decision
H1	Training and development -> Employee Commitment	0.244	0.065	3.986	0.00	Supported
H2	Working Climate -> Employee Commitment	0.452	0.043	9.703	0.00	Supported
H3	Training and development * peer Support -> Employee Commitment	0.133	0.067	1.975	0.02	Supported
H4	Working Climate * Coworker Support -> Employee Commitment	0.142	0.070	2.025	0.02	Supported

As shown in Table 3, there is a significant connection between T&D and EC , with beta=0.244, t=3.986, and p<0.00. addition, the outcome also provided evidence of an important and supportive correlation between the working climate and the employee commitment beta=0.452, t=9.703 and p<0.00. In addition, the study used the product indicator method (Helm, Eggert &

Garnefeld, 2010) to calculate the interaction effects between T&D, working climate and employee commitment.

As shown in Table 3 (=0133, t=1,975, p<0.02), the data found support for Hypothesis 3. The findings show that coworker support has a buffering effect on the relationship between T&D and EC, implying that public universities with a high level of coworker support have a better correlation between T&D and EC than public universities with a lower level of coworker support.

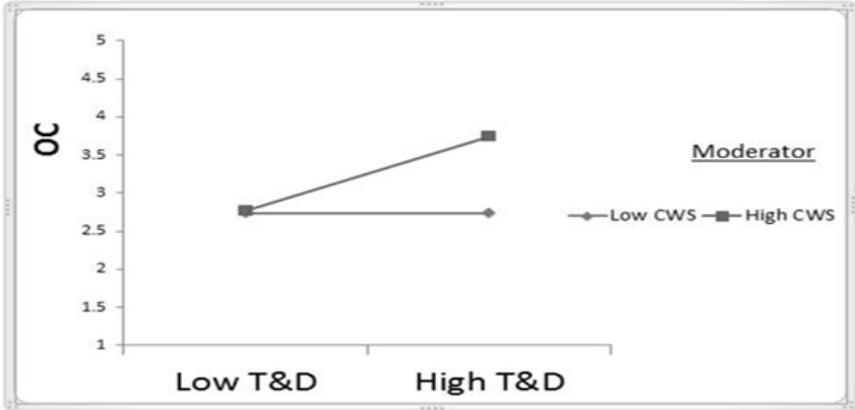


Figure 2. Peer support has an interaction effect on T&D and EC.

Likewise, the findings supported the hypothesised link 4, with the result (=0.142, t=2.025, p<0.02) indicating statistical significance. The moderating effect of peer support on the association between working climate and employee commitment is depicted in Figure 3, which shows that public universities with higher PS have a stronger favorable connection between WC and organisational commitment than public HEIs with lower PS.

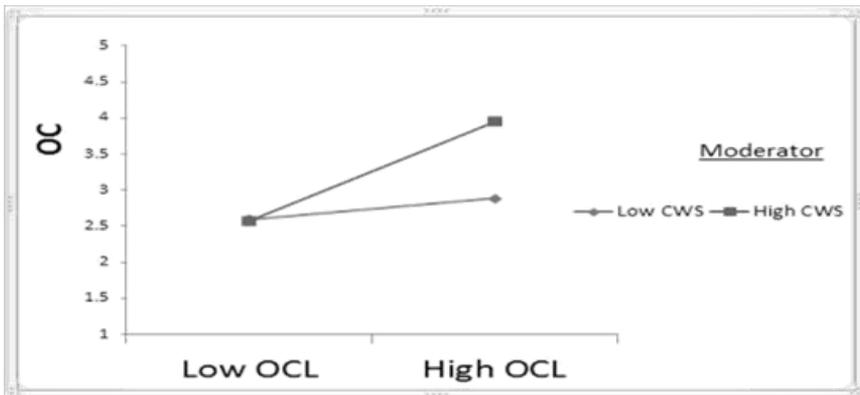


Figure 3: Peer support has an interaction effect on WC and EC.

Moreover, the R^2 for OC is .19, implying that training and development as well as working climate account for 19% of the variance.

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to examine the impact of T&D and working climate on academics' commitment in HEI's Pakistan. The results of the current research imply that training, as well as employee commitment, are inextricably linked. The findings are comparable to those of previous investigations (Al-Emadi & Marquardt, 2007). Universities may have provided them with greater training opportunities due to their lack of experience, this shows that universities can improve the employee abilities and expertise by providing enough opportunities for T&D, which will help academic staff cope with rapidly changing work needs. Furthermore, corporations recognise the

importance of training and are prepared to devote resources to training programmes in order to gain a competitive advantage; it may also aid and increase employee dedication and commitment. SET also agrees with the fact that when academic members are valued by an organisation, they are inspired and feel more invested in that group (Bibi, et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2011).

The current study's findings are in line with those of Ollukkaran & Gunaseelan, (2012), indicating that a positive and secure organisational climate has a beneficial impact on organisational commitment. Blau's (1964) SET theory also illustrates the connection between organisational atmosphere and commitment, which states that when employees have a better working environment, they are more loyal to the company. As a result of the findings, employees are more dedicated to the business when organisations pay close attention to maintaining a positive organisational environment. As a result, universities and HEC should guarantee that academic employees have a pleasant working environment in order to increase their commitment.

The statistics data also validate the Hypothesis #3 as shown in table 3 ($\beta = 0.133$, $t = 1.975$, $p < 0.02$). The current study also backs up Zhou and George's (2001) notion that coworker assistance is critical in organising, exchanging ideas, and delivering mentoring activities. According to the current study strong amicable ties among academic staff in Pakistan's HEI's, can lead to higher levels of employee dedication. One possible explanation is that a coworker in the tutoring session may be useful in Pakistan's public universities. It's also undeniable that the teammate has the capability to establish a favourable or unfavourable working environment.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3 ($\beta = 0.142$, $t = 2.025$, $p < 0.02$), the PLS path modelling results reveal that PS moderates the link between organisational climate and organisational commitment. According to the findings of this study, PS moderates the association between the independent (organisational environment) and dependent variables (organisational commitment). As a result, hypothesis 4 was found to be true. Similarly, prior findings such as Ahmad, Bilal, and Bibi (2020) have demonstrated that peer support plays a critical part in the formation of a healthy workplace climate.

Employees were more dedicated to the organisation when they felt supported by the organisation and their coworkers. The findings revealed that colleague support is critical in the formation of a healthy work environment, as it enhances and aids in the increase of academic staff dedication, particularly in public educational institutions. It could also be due to the nature of the profession, in which academic personnel interact with one another on a regular basis, sharing their knowledge, skills, and striving to grow in order to reach common organisational goals.

Implications

The findings lay the groundwork for a number of theoretical and practical implications related to T&D, organisational atmosphere, and commitment. It contributes to the body of knowledge on T&D, workplace climate, and commitment. The investigation was designed to shed light on the study's previously unpredictable results, and the current researchers made additional efforts to solve the flaws identified in previous studies. Furthermore, this work proposes and investigates the buffering effect of PS in order to have a better understanding of the relationship between the independent (training and development, and s climate) and the dependent variable (organisational commitment) at organisations. The study's findings backed up the idea that training and development, as well as organisational climate, are the most effective ways to increase academic staff's organisational loyalty, as well as the study's practical implications for practitioners and policymakers.

Employee retention is influenced by coworkers who execute the same jobs at the same level of the organisation. This means that when employees are given the necessary training programmes and a pleasant working environment, as well as employee support, they remain loyal to the company.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

In the first place, the survey in this study consists solely of academic staff in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Therefore, additional researches can be extended to different parts of Pakistan. Secondly, the current research proposed a cross-sectional approach. The future study will therefore take into account a longitudinal process. Thirdly, it was only the teaching staff who participated in this study that non-academic staff could be included in the survey for future research. Even farther investigation is also suggested in many other areas, like service industries and private universities. Finally, in order to analyse organisational commitment, this study solely focused on two issues (training and growth and organisational atmosphere). More research is needed in the future to shed light on certain issues that also affect organisational commitment, because organisational commitment is influenced by a variety of factors that are not limited to T&D and working climate in

higher education, particularly in KP, Pakistan, including job rotation, job security, knowledge sharing and performance evaluation.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings add to the growing body of research about the buffering impact of PS on the association between T&D, WC, and employee commitment. The findings of this investigation back up the fundamental theoretical assumptions. Despite some of its limitations, the current study has satisfactorily answered all of the research questions and objectives. While numerous studies have looked at the reasons for decreased commitment, the current study bridged the theoretical gap by including coworker support as a crucial buffering variable.

The research framework has expanded the domain of SET by investigating the buffering effect of coworker support on the link between T&D, working climate, and employee commitment. The findings of this study reveal that organisational commitment is positively connected to training and development and organisational climate. Furthermore, colleague support moderates the association between T&D, organisational climate, and organisational commitment. Furthermore, by demonstrating the existence of significant influences of training and development and organisational climate on organisational commitment, the present study demonstrated how significant these aspects are in developing good attitudes among employees. which leads to increased organisational commitment. Furthermore, it can be stated that government institutions should pay attention to offering suitable possibilities for training and development, as well as a favourable environment, in order to boost academic staff commitment and recruit academic staff.

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