

Employees Empowerment, Organizational Commitment & Mediatory Role of Perceived Organizational Support: Empirical Evidence from Banking Sector of Pakistan

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of employee empowerment on affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC). Further it also analyzed the mediating role of perceived organizational support between study variables. The data was collected from commercial banks of Pakistan (n=300) by using convenience sampling technique. All variables were measured by using scales developed by different scholars. Organizational commitment was measured with the help of scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Employee empowerment was measured by a scale developed by Ashford, Lee and Bobko, (1989). Lastly, perceived organizational support was measured by a scale developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger, (2002). The data gathered was analyzed with the help of SPSS. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis performed that indicated, employee empowerment has a significant positive influence on organizational commitment of employees and perceived organizational support significantly mediated the relationship. The study included recommendations and directions for future research.

Key Words: Organizational Commitment, Employee Empowerment, Perceived Organizational Support.

Introduction

Social exchange theory plays an important role in developing the cordial employee – employer's relationship. A suitably designed and carefully crafted reward and compensation system constitutes the foundations for hiring the requisite workforce for the organization, but retaining such a workforce with the organization needs some other type of recipe (Vig & Dumicic, 2016). The business today is undergoing a difficult phase where retaining the skilled and experienced workforce by organizations has become a tricky affair. The organization's HR policies and reward management systems play a major role in keeping the employees on board for a longer tenure (Vig & Dumicic, 2016). Researchers have established that empowered employees demonstrate a higher degree of loyalty and commitment to the organization as compared to low empowered employees (Haas, 2010). The empowerment increases the feeling of ownership of the employees and enhances the dedication to stay loyal and dedicated to work for the organization (Raza, Ashi, Agusta, Jalal, & Hasan, 2016).

Organizational support contributes a lot in retaining the workforce as the employees feel morally indebted to the organizations which stood by them under difficult circumstances (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). The perceived organizational support, therefore, acts as a positive tool in keeping the employees on board. The perceived organizational support is the expectation of the employees that their organization cares, acknowledges and values their contributions. This belief has a positive impact on the employee's level of commitment and he would like to exhibit positive role to influence other employees to stay loyal as well (Ashraf & Ajmal, 2015; Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015).

Employee empowerment is the organization's decision of providing a certain level of autonomy and responsibility for decision making to the employees. These decisions are at lower level where employees have a unique view of the problems facing the organization. Empowering the employees leads to increased organizational responsiveness to the problems and increased productivity. It also leads to a greater degree of organizational commitment of the employees (Maina, Gachunga, & Karanja, 2016). Perceived organizational support has been in the lime light and focus of research since 1980. It is the degree of sensitivity and opinion of employees regarding extent to which their involvement is appreciated by the organization (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012). Extent research in Pakistan conducted in management sciences indicates that very less number of studies had been conducted on measuring the relationship between organizational employee empowerment and organizational support (Hassan, Hassan, & Shoaib, 2014).

Results of various studies conducted for measuring the variables have indicated diverse, mixed and assorted findings (Hassan, Hassan, & Shoaib, 2014; Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Ashraf & Ajmal, 2015;

Raza, et al., 2016). Moreover, no empirical evidence has been found that has explored perceived organizational support as mediatory variable in predicting impact of employee empowerment on dimensions of organizational commitment. The gap of knowledge was found more pronounced in context of Pakistan where the researchers had conducted a number of studies focusing on organizational commitment, turn over intentions, engagement and perceived organizational support and reported various degrees of relationships between these variable (Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Ashraf & Ajmal, 2015; Raza, et al., 2016) . None of these studies included POS as a mediatory variable. Perceived organizational support has been studied as a mediator variable in a number of studies like Moorman, Blakely, and Niehoff (1998), Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2003), Loi, Hang -yue, and Foley (2006), Behram and Özdemirci, (2014), but there is a lack of empirical evidence of studying POS as mediator between employee empowerment and organizational commitment in context of Pakistan. This study, therefore, will be a small addition in the extent knowledge on the subject and addition of empirical evidence in context of Pakistan. Basing on the past studies and identified gap, the current study will answer the following questions:

- Does employee empowerment have a significant positive impact on organizational commitment of employees in the Banking sector of Pakistan?
- Do POS have a significant positive impact on AC, NC and CC dimensions of organizational commitment of employees in the Banking sector of Pakistan?
- Do POS mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and dimensions of organizational commitment of employees in the Banking sector of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Organizational Commitment (OC)

The study of commitment is the most researched yet a challenging subject in the fields of management, organizational behaviors and human resource since 1970. OC describes a positive inclination of an individual which he or she shows to the establishment (Porter, William, & Smith, 1976) and that results into development of an attitude or orientation towards the organization. Having strong ties with the establishment develops a state of mind where the goals of the individual or worker is increasingly integrated with that of the organization (Becker, 1980). OC is multidimensional construct having three distinct component i.e. affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective Commitment (AC) is that component of OC which indicates that the relation of the employee with the organization revolves around an emotional attachment; employee feels deeply involved in the

organization and likes to be identified with the organization's name and reputation (Samad, 2007). In case of affective commitment (AC) the association of employees with the organization is most willing and they energetically involve in the productive activities. Continuance commitment (CC) is that component of OC which is associated with the benefits related to the job, monetary and other settlement which the employee is getting from a particular job and fear of losing them or lack of available alternatives which keep them tied with the organization or the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization tasks (Chew & Chan, 2008). The Normative Commitment (NC) or moral commitment is the type of commitment which originates from a willing attitude of an employee to stay loyal with the organization and perform in a positive manner for his organization. The employee feels obliged to be loyal and stay associated with the organization's goals and objectives.

Employee Empowerment (EE)

Employee empowerment is opposite to the autocracy, tyranny and dictatorship where the employees are forced to do as directed. Employee empowerment is a state where the employers delegate a number of authorities and powers to the employee so that he can take some decisions to control difficult situations and can use his discretion to perform a set of task related activities at the workplace (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995). Empowerment has four components i.e. meaning, importance and value of the work, competence, knowledge, skills and abilities of the employee to accomplish the task, self-determination, self-sufficiency, liberty and freedom to accomplish the task and impact, level of influence to end or complete the task (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Employee empowerment has been identified as positive contributor for the commitment of employee towards the organizations (Bhatnagar, 2012). The empowerment will induce a feeling of being important and the employees will feel more autonomous at their job (Spreitzer, 1995)

Relationship between OC and Employee Empowerment (EE)

The feeling of being empowered induces a strong sense of ownership and belonging in the minds of employees (Saad, Hassan, & Shoaib, 2014). They take it as their prime responsibility to work for the organizational benefit, take care of organizational resources and align their personal goals with goals of their organization (Ashraf & Ajmal, 2015; Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Maina, 2016). In the light of expectancy and social exchange theories, the organizations reciprocate in terms of tangible and intangible rewards and the employees' commitment to the organization strengthens. Researchers have studied employee empowerment in relation to organizational commitment along with its three dimensions and found a significant positive relationship (Powpaka, 2008; Haas, 2010; Saad, Hassan,

& Shoaib, 2014; Ashraf & Ajmal, 2015; Iqbal & Hashmi, 2015; Maina, 2016). With this empirical evidence from the literature, our hypotheses are:

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between employee empowerment and affective organizational commitment.

H₂: There is a significant positive relationship between employee empowerment and normative organizational commitment.

H₃: There is a significant positive relationship between employee empowerment and continuance organizational commitment.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived organizational support (POS) is the degree of belief which employees have regarding acknowledgement of their services and expectation that organization will value those services and render support for them (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). Employees put more efforts and become more loyal when they see indications that they are owned and rewarded by the organization. It has been established by the researchers that the employee attitude and behavior toward job is highly affected by various policies and programs introduced by organization for welfare, training and development of the employees (WannYih & Hatik, 2011). Better support of the organization leads to better response from the employee on the workplace and thus they tend to stay loyal and committed (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Loi, Hang-yue, & Foley, 2006).

Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Empowerment

Organizational support develops a stronger feeling of empowerment in the employees such that they feel accountable and perform their task with ease and independence (Ahmad, et al., 2010). The expected organizational support makes the employee more confident and sure that he will have all required resources to accomplish the task proficiently and will receive recognition from his organization. The perceived organizational support and employee empowerment are positively related with each other (Maina, 2016).

H₄: Employee empowerment has a significant positive relationship with the perceived organizational support.

Relationship between OC and POS

The POS develops feelings of being obliged in the employees who in turn reciprocate in showing positive work behaviors. The organizations also work in this direction and keep on investing on the employees to satisfy their professional, social and financial needs in terms of providing chances for

training and development and by announcing various employee oriented financial benefits. An increased degree of POS leads towards the creation feelings in the employees where they feel pride in being part of the organization.

H_5 : POS has a significant positive relationship with affective organizational commitment

H_6 : POS has a significant positive relationship with normative organizational commitment.

H_7 : POS has a significant Positive relationship with continuance organizational commitment.

POS as a Mediator

Detailed probe of literature suggests that POS contributes positively in building positive image of the organization in the eyes of employees and the labor market which result in building a good reputation of the organization as a caring setup and good paymaster who looks after its employees and their needs (Moideenkutty et al., 2001; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Loi, Hangyue, & Foley, 2006). Relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment has been studied in past to establish that perceived organizational support is an important factor in predicting organizational commitment (Tansky & Cohen, 2001; Yoon & Thye, 2002).

Perceived organizational support has shown a positive relationship with affective, normative and continuance commitment (McDonald & Makin, 2000; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Colakoglu, Culha, & Atay, 2010). Thus, in the light of the empirical studies, the hypotheses are:

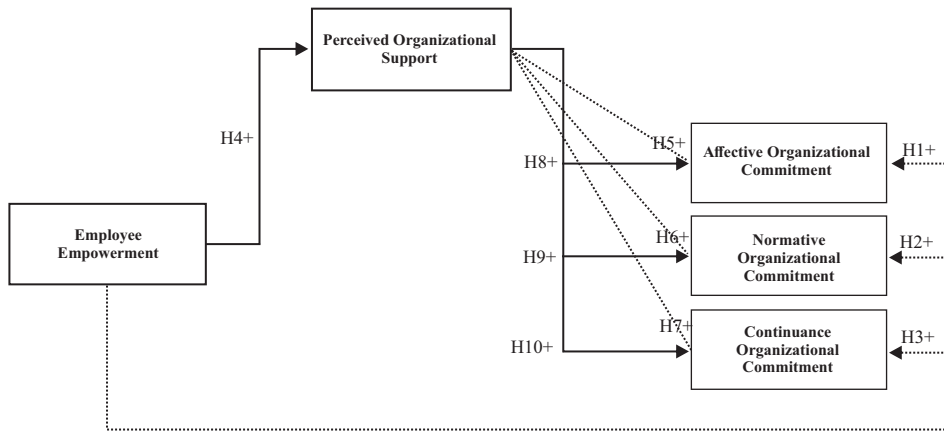
H_8 : POS mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and affective organization commitment.

H_9 : POS mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and normative organizational commitment.

H_{10} : POS mediates the relationship between employee empowerment and continuance organizational commitment

Theoretical Framework

Keeping in view the literature the following theoretical framework can be formed:



Research Methodology

Research design

The purpose of the study is mainly hypotheses testing and is correlational in nature. The time horizon of the current study is cross-sectional and study setting non contrived environment with researcher's interference minimum. The data was collected with the help of self-administered questionnaire rated on Likert scale and the unit of analysis was individual.

Population /Sample

According to an estimate, total numbers of banks in Pakistan are 38 including 5 public sector banks, 22 domestic banks, 7 foreign banks and 4 specialized banks. There are total 10984 branches operating in the country. The population of the present study comprises public and private sector commercial banks of Pakistan. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the respondents through a self-administered questionnaire. A sample of 300 employees (managers and non-managers) from banking sector of Pakistan was selected.

The study was conducted in two different phases. During phase – I, pilot study was conducted with the view to ascertain the psychometric properties of the scales. However, during the phase II, the hypotheses were tested on sample of 300 managers and non- managers from public and private sector commercial banks of Pakistan. Following measuring scales were opted:

- *Organizational Commitment (OC)* was measured by an instrument developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). The scale consisted of 25 items out of which 8 items were meant to measure affective, 9 items to measure continuance and 8 items to measure normative commitment. Each item was anchored at 5- point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

- *Perceived Organization Support (POS)* was measured by a short form of survey of perceived organizational support (SPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al., (1986). Short form of scale consisted of 8 items which were anchored at 5- point Likert type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.
- *Employee Empowerment (EE)* was measured by the scales developed by Ashford, Lee and Bobko, (1989). The scale consisted of 15 items and were anchored at 5- point Likert type scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Results & Discussion

Pilot study, with a sample of 100 employees was conducted to establish the reliability and validity of the scales adopted to measure the variables (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The result indicated that 25% respondents were managers and 75% non-managers out of which 66 % were male and 34% were female. Large numbers of respondents (57%) were from the age group of 21 – 30 years. Item total correlation (Churchill, 1979), Univariate Normality (Muthan & Kaplan, 1985) and reliability (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986) tests were performed to establish consistency.

Main study was conducted after having established the reliability and consistency of the scales. There were 300 respondents out of which 63 % male and 37 % female and 29 % were managers and 71 % were non managers. The spread of age indicated that 32 % respondents were having age 30 years and below while 68 % aged above 31 years. There are 63% of correspondents having experience 5-10 years while 37% were having experience 11 years and above.

Table 1: *Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of all Variables (N = 300)*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlations				
			AC	CC	NC	EE	POS
AC	3.13	.616	1	.396**	.449**	.319**	.432**
CC	3.12	.716		1	.444**	.304**	.316**
NC	3.22	.623			1	.339**	.478**
EE	3.61	.709				1	.344**
POS	3.20	.586					1

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

Table 1 above indicates correlation of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitments with the independent study variables. The correlation of affective commitment with study variables was POS ($r=0.43^{**}$, $p<.001$) and employee empowerment ($r=0.32^{**}$, $p<.001$). Continuance commitment also indicated a very significant positive correlation with the independent variables i.e. POS ($r=0.31^{**}$, $p<.001$) and employee empowerment ($r=0.30^{**}$, $p<.001$). Normative commitment showed a very significant positive correlation with all the independent variables POS ($r=0.47^{**}$, $p<.001$) and employee empowerment ($r=0.33^{**}$, $p<.001$). POS has indicated a very significant positive correlation with employee empowerment ($r=0.34^{**}$, $p<.001$).

Multiple regressions were performed, by using SPSS, to measure effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table 2: *Regression analysis for Affective Organizational Commitment on Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Empowerment (N= 300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	T	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		41.7	5.19	.000	.214
	POS	.365		6.69	.000	
	EE	.193		3.54	.000	

Table 2 above contains the result of multiple regressions performed for affective commitment. The results indicate that perceived organizational support ($\beta = .365$, $p < 0.001$) has a significantly positive effect on organizational commitment and employee empowerment ($\beta = .193$, $p < 0.001$) the affective organizational commitment. The values of adjusted $R^2 = 0.214$ indicates that 21% variations in the affective commitment are caused due to selected independent variables.

Table 3: *Regression analysis for Continuance Organizational Commitment on Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Empowerment (N= 300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	t	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		24.780	4.27	.000	.137
	POS	.240		4.19	.000	
	EE	.221		3.86	.000	

Table-3 above shows the results of multiple regressions performed for the continuance commitment. The result indicates that perceived organizational support ($\beta = .240, p < 0.001$) and employee empowerment ($\beta = .221, p < 0.001$) has significant positive impact on continuance commitment. The values of adjusted $R^2 = 0.137$ for the model indicates that 13% variations in the continuance commitment are caused due to selected independent variables.

Table 4: *Regression analysis for Normative Organizational Commitment on Perceived Organizational Support and Empowerment (N= 300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	t	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		53.008	4.21	.000	.258
	POS	.410		5.90	.000	
	EE	.198		3.73	.000	

Table – 4 above shows the results of multiple regressions performed for Normative Commitment. The result indicates that perceived organizational support ($\beta = 0.4410, p < 0.001$) and employee empowerment ($\beta = .198, p < 0.001$) has significant positive impact on normative commitment. The value of adjusted $R^2 = 0.258$ indicates that 25% variations in the normative commitment are caused due to selected independent variables.

Table 5: *Regression analysis for Mediatory Impact POS between Affective Organizational Commitment and Employee Empowerment (N= 300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	t	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		33.760	12.1	.000	.099
	EE	.319		5.81	.000	
	(Constant)		41.748	6.27	.000	
2	EE	.193		3.54	.000	
	POS	.365		6.69	.000	.214

Table – 5 above shows the results of multiple regressions performed to check mediation of POS between employee empowerment and for affective commitment.

The result indicates that (a) there is a significant relationship between employee empowerment, POS and affective commitment (b) the relationship between employee empowerment and affective commitment remained significant ($\beta = .319, p < 0.001$) (c) beta value of employee empowerment reduced after inclusion of mediatory variable ($\beta = .193, p < 0.001$) (d) R^2 has improved from 0.099 to 0.214 (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Result indicated that POS has partial mediation effect between affective commitment and employee empowerment.

Table 6: *Regression analysis for Mediatory Impact POS between Continuance Organizational Commitment and Employee Empowerment (N= 300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	t	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		30.2	9.82	.000	.089
	EE	.304		5.503	.000	
2	(Constant)		24.7	5.49	.000	
	E	.221		3.86	.000	
	POS	.240		4.19	.000	.137

Table – 6 above shows the results of multiple regressions performed to check mediation of POS between employee empowerment and for continuance commitment.

The result indicates that (a) there is a significant relationship between employee empowerment, POS and continuance commitment (b) the relationship between employee empowerment and continuance commitment remained significant ($\beta = .304, p < 0.001$) (c) beta value of employee empowerment reduced after inclusion of mediatory variable ($\beta = .221, p < 0.001$) (d) R^2 has improved from 0.089 to 0.137 (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Result indicated that POS has partial mediation between continuance commitment and employee empowerment.

Table 7: *Regression analysis for Mediatory Impact POS between Normative Organizational Commitment and Employee Empowerment (N=300)*

Model	Variable	Regression Coefficients	F	t	Sig	R ²
1	(Constant)		38.5	12.15	.000	.112
	EE	.339		6.21	.000	
2	(Constant)		53.0	5.90	.000	
	EE	.198		3.72	.000	
	POS	.410		7.73	.000	.258

Table – 7 above shows the results of multiple regressions performed to check mediation of POS between employee empowerment and for normative commitment.

The result indicates that (a) there is a significant relationship between employee empowerment, POS and normative commitment (b) the relationship between employee empowerment and normative commitment remained significant ($\beta = .339$, $p < 0.001$) (c) beta value of employee empowerment reduced after inclusion of mediatory variable ($\beta = .198$, $p < 0.001$) (d) R^2 has improved from 0.112 to 0.258 (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Result indicated that POS has partial mediation between normative commitment and employee empowerment.

Conclusion

The current study was conducted with the aim to measure impact of employee empowerment on affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC) along with investigating the impact of perceived organizational support as mediating variable between the variables. The study was conducted on the employees of banking sector of Pakistan. The results indicated that employee empowerment has a significant positive impact on AC, NC and CC which provided evidence for accepting the hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. This result is in line with the previous studies conducted by the researchers (Singh & Singh, 2010; Beheshtifar, Nezhad, & Moghadam, 2012; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012; Hassan, Kibriya, & Nawaz, 2013). A significant positive relationship was found between POS and EE providing evidence for accepting the hypothesis 4 which is in conformity with the work of previous researchers (Hassan, Kibriya, & Nawaz, 2013). The results also indicated a significant positive impact of POS on AC, NC and CC which substantiates the evidence for accepting the hypothesis 5, 6 and 7 of the study. The results are in line with the previous studies conducted by the researchers (Hashmi & Nqvi, 2012; Hassan, Kibriya, & Nawaz, 2013). The results indicated existence of a partial mediation between the Employee empowerment and all the dimensions of organizational commitment i.e. AC, NC and CC.

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