Association of Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention: The Moderating Role of Psychological Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of employee's engagement on employees' turnover intention and evaluates the moderating role of psychological empowerment in this association. Data was collected from employees of private sector Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Peshawar, KP, Pakistan using multi-stage cluster sampling technique. A total of 305 cases were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis through IBM SPSS 25 and confirmatory factor analysis using IBM AMOS 26. Findings of the research document the subsistence of reasonable and confirmative association of employee engagement with turnover intention and confirm the moderation of psychological empowerment. The findings are important for body of knowledge and HEIs managers and leaders in that they reflect employers can reduce turnover intention by enhancing psychological empowerment. In the context of Pakistan, particularly higher education institutes the hypothesized association is understudied, whereby less attention is paid to study of psychological empowerment. This study fills this research gap.

INTRODUCTION

Academic professionals play a key role in a higher education institution's overall performance. One of the problems faced by private sector higher education institutions (HEIs) is turnover of qualified and experienced professionals. Employees' turnover intention is an estimation of their decision to quit current positions (Agoi, 2015). Turnover intention is described by Du Plooy & Roodt (2010) and Morrell, Loan-Clarke, & Lacity (2008) as the degree to which an organization employee's schemes to leave it. According to Salahudin et al, (2018), employees see turnover intention as being ineffectively managed and many job-related issues go unaddressed, which leads to greater employee disintegration. According to Arshad (2016), work environment-related factors can affect the intention to quit. Workplace qualities are regarded as a key predictor of intention to

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leave for several reasons. Employee turnover is a big and crucial issue in higher education institutions. Reduced turnover intention, according to Mignonac & Richebé (2013), helps to reduce employee voluntary turnover. Deep student engagement in learning, as well as the teacher's engagement in teaching, are the most important antecedents to high levels of student accomplishment. Employee engagement is considered to be the mental eagerness of an individual for the completion of task positions in a company (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Schaufeli & Salanova (2007) defined work engagement as a significant feature necessary for more inspiration on several aspects that promotes or obstruct the degree to which work engagement has progressed. Many studies on engagement are conducted by various researchers (Blomme, Kodden & Beasley-Suffolk, 2015), with some focusing on the engagement of employees (Rana, Ardichvili, & Tkachenko, 2014). There are several statistical confirmations, which indicate work engagement is linked to various degrees of personal and collective performance (Geeth & Sebastian, 2014). Work engagement is critical for the success of an institution since disengaged personnel has an adverse influence on the effectiveness, prosperity, and stability of an organization.

According to Ugwu, Onitsha, & Sanchez (2014), psychological empowerment is one of the task sources that aid in meeting workplace criteria. Rooted in positive psychology, the psychological empowerment construct has a motivational orientation and is defined as the employee feeling of being in control over the work situations (Matsuo, 2019). Seibert, Wang & Courtright (2011) explain that psychological empowerment is caused by two types of outputs: (1) attitudinal outcomes like work satisfaction, corporate engagement, agitation, and turnover intention and (2) cognitive results such as career development, citizenship, and inventive initiatives. Empowerment from a psychological standpoint is a natural or tangled process that can only be achieved when psychological states develop an appreciation of empowerment in the employee. It is the employee's feedback to work situations, not the state of the workplace, which influences organizational behavior (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008).

According to Khuwaja (2012), management of the human resources is a commonly overlooked aspect in the Pakistani educational sector, but it must be taken into account in times of competition and globalization. Employee turnover has a negative impact on firms because it disrupts team performance and success, resulting in additional financial expenditures (Kesner & Dalton, 1994). According to Schyns, Torka & Gössling (2007), the turnover intention should be minimized or avoided as much as possible because it is associated with costs such as cost associated with new

hiring or failure costs occurring during the first period. In the contemporary era of developing knowledge workers, the loss of knowledge and skills of experienced staff such as instructors is a major problem (Delong, 2004). Academic staff turnover is expected to rise as a result of ample alternatives for employees to appropriately select universities based on their preferences and satisfaction factors. Therefore, this research endeavored to inspect the role of employee engagement in lowering turnover intention in private sector higher education institutions (HEIs) in Peshawar, Pakistan, and investigated the moderating role of psychological empowerment in relation to employee engagement with turnover intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

Numerous researchers and organizations have studied employee engagement for a long time, using various languages and concepts (Lockwood, 2007). The definition of employee engagement varies widely across organizations (Riyanto, Endri, & Herlisha, 2021) and there are several definitions of work engagement (employee engagement). However, Schaufeli & Salanova's (2007) definition is the most important and universal. Work engagement (employee engagement), according to them, is a pleasant and confident, rewarding, job-related brain condition characterized by absorption, vitality, and dedication. Employee engagement is becoming more important in the twenty-first century as the value of human capital and its psychological commitment to the company grows (Schaufeli, 2013). Active employees' engagement is important for performance enhancement (Riyanto, Endri, & Herlisha, 2021). Bothma & Roodt (2012) and Simons & Buitendach (2013) identified vigor, devotion, absorption as three aspects of achieving a career psychological condition that thoroughly characterizes employee engagement. The engagement of employees becomes a fundamental and crucial aspect of a company's success (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). In the fields of business and management, organizational psychology, and human resource management, employee engagement is a growing idea (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). According to Schaufeli & Salanova (2007), incredibly dedicated employees are passionate, prosecuted to respective occupations, and are well prepared to manage the duties.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is outlined by Spreitzer (1995) as the cluster of inspirational opinions and thoughts generated by workplace culture and indicating an employee's proactive direction to job function. Psychological empowerment is defined as a person's perspective of their professional

position and ability to influence results (Whitman, Halbesleben & Shanine, 2013). Meaning, self-determination, competence, and influence are four constituent components of psychological empowerment (Malik, Chugtai, Iqbal & Ramzan, 2013). According to Geeth & Sebastian (2014), employee psychological empowerment is an important aspect that leads to an organization's performance. The psychological empowerment of employees results in desirable workplace behaviors (Abbasi, Shabbir, Abbas, & Tahir, 2021) and can further be triggered by a sense of identification with the organization. According to Seibert et al (2011), two elements influence the psychological environment: contextual (external) and individual characteristics (internal). Psychological Empowerment is a favorable self-evaluation attribute that is linked to individual variables. Psychological Empowerment entails the sharing of critical organizational elements e.g. information about the performance of the organization, knowledge enabling employees to comprehend, engage in company effectiveness, rewards for the achievement of the institution, and decision-making skills that affect the organization's direction and performance. Psychological empowerment is an internal incentive for employees that stems from four cognitions that describe a person's familiarity with a task (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Intrinsic motivation, self-determination, competence, and impact are such four perceptions (Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention is the intent of an employee to quit his/her current job. According to Matz, Woo & Kim (2014), the deliberate and intentional willfulness and persistence of an employee to depart an organization is referred to as turnover intention. Thus, it is the mental process of considering to quit one's employment, planning to leave, or expressing wanting to quit. Turnover intention exerts a significant detrimental influence on the bottom line of the business bearing both direct and indirect costs (Henneman, 2016). Individual, organizational, and job attributes all have the potential to possess a considerable impact on satisfaction with one's job and can lead to voluntary turnover (Ghosh, et al., 2015). Employees' and co-workers' behavior may diverge as a result of turnover intentions, and/or as a loss of affection and the organization's performance (Sharma & Namburdiri, 2015). Another factor that influences the intention to leave is job stress (Jung & Yoon, 2014). Salary dissatisfaction, insufficient management support, organizational culture, and biased treatment are all factors that contribute to workplace stress (Hwang et al., 2014). Voluntary employee turnover commitment is heavily influenced by leadership (Elanain,

2014). Turnover intention is a phenomenon with substantial practical implications. It costs businesses money in the context of recruiting, training, and layoffs organizational memory, typically associated with poor performance in both private and social capital.

Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention

According to Bakker & Ten-Cate (2013), the engagement of employees, worker happiness, and motivation is linked to individual success lowering turnover intention in an institution. Employee disengagement manifests itself in high turnover rates, poor performance, and low productivity. Employee involvement is associated with a lower turnover intention (Alfes, Shantz, Truss & Soane, 2013; Gupta & Shaheen, 2017). When workers permanently wish to leave or are no longer dependent on the company for wage, esteem any other benefits, the relationship entre the employee and the organization becomes invalid (Christian& Ellis, 2014). Individual and organizational components are split into the outcome variables of work engagement (employee engagement); the turnover intention is part of each individual job output; staffs with great commitment to work are less inclined to settle (Walker & Campbell, 2013). Studying employees' engagement within small and medium-sized firms in China, Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed, & Iqbal, (2021) concluded that employees' engagement is negatively associated with a toxic workplace environment. Employee engagement is connected to a lower turnover intention (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010). Numerous specialists have shown a connection between worker engagement and turnover intention (Wefald, Smith, Savastano & Downey, 2008). Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) argued that providing job resources improves employees' motivation by making workers more involved in work and, as a result, reduces the likelihood of people leaving their jobs. Disengaged workers, according to Gubman (2004), are more prone to actively seek new employment. To retain and engage skilled individuals in higher education institutions, recognizing the factors that keep individuals in their current jobs is crucial (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). Retaining endowed professionals encourages greater decision-making abilities, improves curriculum program quality through the use of the best applications, improves educational services, and decreases the cost associated with turnover (Kidwell, Vander-Linde & Johnson, 2000). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H_1: *Employee engagement is negatively related to turnover intention in private sector higher education institutions.*

Moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment directly affects the commitment and engagement of employees. Employees who are psychologically safe stay engaged with their work (Albrecht & Andretta, 2011). There is an empirical link between employee engagement and psychological empowerment (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Psychological empowerment offers an overall favorable effect on productivity consequences such as the engagement of employees concerning the job or geographical location (Arogundade et al., 2015; Saif & Saleh, 2013). Employees' turnover intention is found to be negatively affected by organizational support (Huang et al., 2021) that can be manifested in the form of psychological empowerment and reduced turnover intention. Moreover, Khan et al., (2021) positively associated employees' psychological empowerment with servant leadership and concluded that it predicts employees job crafting behavior. Psychological empowerment is also found to be significantly associated with team autonomy (Malik, Sarwar & Orr, 2021) indicating that practices that ensure autonomy are a major source of psychological empowerment. According to Bhatnagar (2012), psychologically empowered employees are happier, devoted, and are not expected to engross intention to quit. According to Bester, Stander & Van-Zyl (2015), workers with strong psychological empowerment bear affirmative views for their respective professions; ultimately resulting in higher employee performance, satisfaction, loyalty, increased citizenship behavior, and a desire for job continuity. Bhatnager (2012) argued that psychological empowerment influences employees' commitment to an organization. Thus, psychological empowerment increases enthusiasm, reduce turnover intentions, and enable employees to gain self-reliance at work. In a study, Nawawi et al (2015) discovered an inverse association between turnover intention and psychological empowerment. When an organization is a good fit for the workers, they are more likely to stay with it. Employees with strong psychological empowerment report higher levels of satisfaction and intention to stay with the company (Islam, Ahmed & Ahmad, 2015; Meyerson & Kline, 2008; Nawawi et al., 2015). Prati & Zani (2016) psychological empowerment shows a deleterious effect on intentions for turnover. It is, therefore, hypothesized that:

H₂: Psychological empowerment moderates the association of employee engagement with turnover intention in private sector higher education institutions.
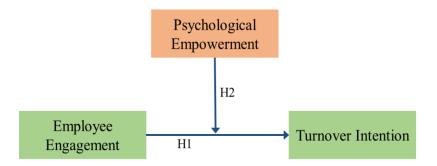
Figure 1: The Study's Conceptual Model

Theoretical Foundation

Employee engagement is explained by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) that states that employees communicate with others and is determined by the assertion of taking incentives from another party (Blau, 1964). When all parties are involved in operating by payback norms, it has been perceived that work relationships develop into dedicated and reciprocal commitment. Personal Engagement Theory (PET) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) according to Kahn (1990), share commonalities in that they both grow from comparable commitments in which individuals interchange favorable job attitudes and behaviors toward creating connections. According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), employees generally want to perceive psychologically empowered, and when individuals feel empowered, many want to continue working with the same organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study used a non-experimental correlation design, survey strategy, and deductive approach. Survey research can use a variety of data collection techniques, with questionnaires and interviews being the most popular.

Sample Size and Population

Population for the study comprised of teaching faculty working in private sector Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) formula was used to compute the minimum sample size of 315 participants. The sample was drawn in two stages. At stage 1 three private sector universities were chosen as clusters and at stage two respondents were chosen based on convenient sampling. Professionals in HEIs constitute both male and female populations. A total of 315 questionnaires were issued and completed by respondents with various

demographic characteristics such as gender, age, job experience, University Name, Department, Position, Grade, and Education acquired for this investigation. A total of 305 (response rate = 96.82%) teachers completed the survey. The demographic information of employees, which includes gender, age, experience, and education achieved are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of The Respondents

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	228	74.8
	Female	77	25.2
Age (years)	21-30	78	25.6
	31-40	153	50.2
	41-50	57	18.7
	51-60	17	5.5
Experience (years)	1-10	224	73.4
	11-20	77	25.3
	21-30	04	01.3
	>30	00	00
Education	Bachelor	19	6.2
	Master	27	8.9
	MS/MPhil	163	53.4
	PhD	96	31.5

Measures

The Intellect, Social, and Affective (ISA) engagement survey (Soan et al, 2012) was used to examine employees' levels of engagement for this research study. The instrument is made up of nine items, every of including a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1-7). Menon's (2001) employee empowerment scale was used to assess psychological empowerment. This measure has nine items on a 7-points Likert scale vacillating from 1=strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree. To assess turnover intention, Jensen, Patel & Messersmith (2013) scale was used, which is a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagrees) to 7 (strongly agrees).

Data Analysis Procedure

To put the hypotheses to the test Hierarchical Regression Modelling was used. Age, gender, and tenure were used as control variables whereas the independent variable was employee engagement, moderating variable was psychological empowerment and the dependent variable was the turnover intention. After participants complete the survey, data were exported into a comprehensive statistical computer program IBM SPSS 25, which allows a researcher to use the data and produce

a wide range of statistics.

Findings & Discussion

Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Sample demographics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables. Negative correlations were found among turnover intention, employees' engagement, and psychological empowerment, while a positive correlation was found among employees' engagement and psychological empowerment.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

| Constructs | N | Mean | SD | Min. | Max. | Var | Correlations | | |
							TOI	EmpEng	PsyEmp
1. TOI	305	3.14	1.749	1	7	3.060	1.000		
2. EmpEng	305	4.70	1.613	1	7	2.601	-0.650^{**}	1.000	
3. PsyEmp	305	5.17	1.378	2	7	1.898	-0.509^{**}	0.582^{**}	1.000

Notes: EmpEng=Employee Engagement, TOI=Turnover Intention, PsyEmp=Psychological Empowerment

Reliability Statistics

The Cronbach's alpha scores (Table 3) ranging from 0.936 to 0.970 evidenced scales reliability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for each study construct also evidenced adequate loadings and scales reliability (Table 4 and Figure 2).

Table 3: Variables along with Source and Number of Items

Variables	Sources	No. of items	Reliability
Employee Engagement	Soan et al, (2012)	9	0.970
Psychological Empowerment	Menon (2001)	9	0.936
Turnover Intention	Jensen et al (2013)	5	0.945

Table 4: CFA for Employee Engagement

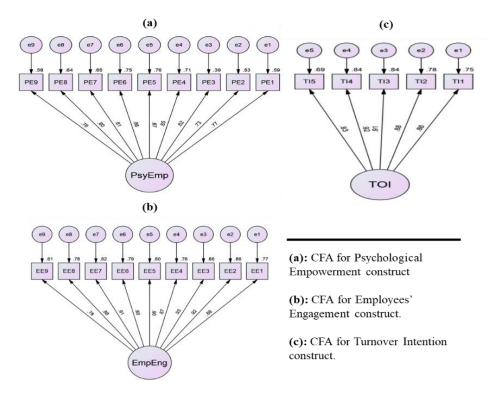| Construct	X^2	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	Df
Employee Engagement	272.991	0.173	0.929	0.814	27
Psychological Empowerment	270.276	0.172	0.903	0.805	27
Turnover intention	26.203	0.118	0.985	0.964	5

Figure 2: Results of CFA for study variables

Hypothesis Testing

For investigating the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention (hypothesis 1), a negative association was found between the variables (Model 2, β=-0.705**, p=0.000) presented in Table 5. Correlation analysis (Table 2) also confirmed the negative association among the variables. Therefore, hypothesis 1 stating that employees' engagement is negatively related to employees' turnover intention was supported.

For hypothesis 2 regarding the moderating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship of employees' engagement and turnover intention, the results shown in Table 5 indicated that the interaction of employees' engagement and psychological empowerment significantly (Model 4, b=0.272, $p<.01$) effect employees' turnover intention. The results specified that psychological empowerment positively moderates the association between employees' engagement and turnover intention, thus confirming hypothesis H2. Examination of regression lines (Figure 3) also evidence the moderating role of psychological empowerment.

Table 5: Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

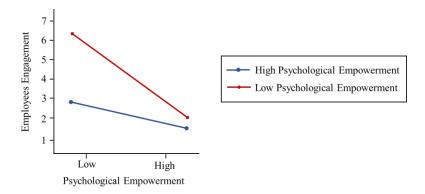| Variables	Turnover Intention			
	Model-1	Model-2	Model-3	Model-4
Control				
Gender	0.06	0.11	0.10	0.08
Education	0.08	0.10	0.09	0.07
Age	-0.05	-0.04	-0.03	0.02
Independent				
Employees Engagement		-0.705**	-0.410**	-0.212**
Moderator				
Psychological Empowerment			-0.358**	-0.573**
Interaction				
Employees Engagement * Psychological Empowerment				0.272**
R^2	0.02	0.422	0.526	0.683
ΔR^2	0.02	0.402	0.104	0.16
F	1.81	-17.88**	-20.13**	-26.58**
ΔF	1.81	15.07**	14.89**	13.64**

Notes: ** p<0.01

Figure 2: Moderating effect of Psychological Empowerment in the relationship of Employees Engagement and Turnover Intention

DISCUSSION

According to the current study employee engagement reduces turnover intention, with the moderation of psychological empowerment at private sector higher education institutions in Peshawar, KP, Pakistan. The results are in accordance with Bhatnager (2012) found that psychological empowerment affects employee engagement and reduces turnover intention. In, organizations, when job resources are scarce, employees become disengaged, which increases the turnover intention (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). Saks (2006) summarized several studies on work engagement and concluded that job engagement negatively affects employee turnover. Biswakarma (2015) identified a significant moderate negative association between employee engagement and turnover intention in Nepalese private banks. This research supports the findings of Schilling's (2014) empirical study, which identified negative relation between employee engagement and turnover intentions. The findings of the study are also in accordance with Alfes et al (2013) and Gupta & Shaheen (2017) who concluded that employee engagement significantly predicts turnover intention. Regarding the moderating role of psychological empowerment, the outcomes of the study are in accordance with Geetha et al. (2014) who discovered a positive relationship between workers' engagement and psychological empowerment in three service organizations. According to Homborstad & Perry (2011), psychological empowerment and turnover intentions are also linked. Furthermore, the study findings are consistent with those of earlier research (Albrecht & Andretta, 2011). In line with prior research, the current study's results suggest that the greater the psychological empowerment achieved by employees, the greater is the desire to remain in organizations.

Implications

The current work contributed theoretically by proposing a new model with a unique set of variables. The current study demonstrates about moderating effect of psychological empowerment in relationship with employee engagement and turnover intention. Rationally, the findings of the present study would aid university administration by providing important information on how to keep loyal staff for a longer period. The current study investigates a possible link amongst the predicting variable employee engagement and the endogenous variable turnover intention, which is moderated by psychological empowerment. Employee engagement is a fairly novel concept which is not been linked to psychological empowerment and turnover intention, so this research fills a gap in the literature. Personal Engagement Theory (PET) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) by Kahn (1990) were used as a theoretical foundation. Employee engagement, as well as psychological empowerment, has been proven to be inversely connected with turnover intention in the previous studies. Findings point out the importance of addressing workers' engagement and psychological empowerment in the context of universities in an attempt to manifest employees' turnover intention.

Limitations

This research study does have some limitations. For starters, the study utilized a small sample size, and the research focused on a single segment of a sector, so the likelihood of response variance was minimal. Data was gathered from a single city in Pakistan, Peshawar, in the province of KP. As a result, the repercussions may not apply to the entire country. Moreover, the sampling technique employed for the study and cross-sectional nature limits the generalizability of the findings. Also, the non-inclusion of cultural context variables in the study is a limitation of the study.

Future Directions

In the future, the study might be conducted with larger sample size, and using sophisticated analytical approaches, future studies can explore mediating/moderating methods with other variables in the association of employee engagement and turnover intention. Although this was an empirical study with a quantitative focus, researchers might conduct a qualitative study with the help of observation and interviews. Moreover, it is critical to recognize and address employee engagement, psychological empowerment, and turnover intention among academic staff, it is also critical to consider employee engagement, psychological empowerment, and turnover intention

among non-academic personnel. Although data for the current study was collected cross-sectional, longitudinal research could potentially provide more understanding regarding association involving employee engagement, psychological empowerment, and turnover intention. Geographical coverage of in-hand research might expand via including other cities. In this regard, studies should be conducted with a focus on model specification and theory building.

CONCLUSION

This research evaluated the role of employee engagement in lowering turnover intention in private sector higher education institutions (HEIs) in Peshawar, Pakistan, and examined the moderating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship of employee engagement with turnover intention. The study used a non-experimental correlation design, survey strategy, and deductive approach. The study provides empirical evidence that employee engagement negatively affects employees' turnover intention and psychological empowerment moderates this association. In accordance with the previous literature, the study results evidenced that the higher the level of psychological empowerment, the more are employees likely to stay at their current job. The findings of the study add to the current body of knowledge and imply that universities can retain employees through enhanced engagement and psychological empowerment. The study also provides some viable future research directions.

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