IMPACTS OF HR PRACTICES ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

In the fierce competition among SMEs in developing countries, HR practices are crucial concerning organizational commitment. SMEs strive for competitive advantage in the industry through high commitment of their employees concerning corporate goals of the firm. This study examined the relationship between HR practices such as recruitment and selection, training, financial rewards and recognition and organizational commitment. The data were collected from 223 employees of SMEs using the quantitative approach based on the questionnaire data collection method. Data were further analyzed for results in Smart PLS, deploying structured equation model (SEM) technique. The results indicated that direct path relationships among HR practices, organizational commitment and organizational culture; organizational culture and organizational commitment were positive and significant. Moreover, the study also found that organizational culture positively mediates between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment. This adds in the existing knowledge of the chosen constructs and uniquely examines them in Pakistan's context. Also, this study offers practical implications for SMEs to develop HR strategies to enhance organizational commitment.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes in the existing knowledge of the constructs of HR practices, namely recruitment and selection, training, financial rewards and recognition. Furthermore, this study uniquely examines the mediation of organizational culture between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment within SMEs of Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resource (HR) practices play a significant role in the success of organizations. Multidimensional effects of HR practices assist the organizations in accomplishing personal and corporate goals (Jawaad, Amir, Bashir, & Hasan, 2019). In the global context, HR practices are becoming accessible for attaining competitive advantage (Sohn, Kim, Kwon, & Park, 2018). HR

practices such as recruitment and selection, job security, training and evaluation (Pfeffer, 2005) transforms employee attitudes towards their organizations (Abdullah & Boyle, 2015). Past research has examined the effects of HR Practices on organizational commitment (Jawaad et al., 2019; Sohn et al., 2018). However, mediation of organizational culture between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment was less studied in prior research.

In order to explore HR practices, this study focuses on recruitment and selection as first HR practice, Training as second, financial rewards and recognition as third and fourth HR practices concerning organizational commitment. Scholars argue that HR practices act as sustainable factors to achieve competetive advantage (Barney, 1995). HR practices also affect the employee trust and organizational performance (Gould-Williams, 2003). Past research has examined that HR practices positively affect firm performance which ultimately leads to organzational commitment (Naz, Aftab, & Awais, 2016). Scholars argue that HR practices must intend to develop a skillful and productive workforce, further targeting the growth of the organizations. Such HR practices have the ultimate positive effects of the relationship between organizations and their employees (Koster, 2011).

Organizational commitment (OC) emerges as an outcome of effectively executed HR practices. Organizational commitment refers to "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). The HR practices such as person-organization fit, remuneration and recognition, working on challenging jobs, training, and career development opportunities positively affect organizational commitment (Chew & Chan, 2008). This study focuses on finding the effects on the organizational commitment by the HR practices namely "recruitment and selection, training, financial rewards and recognition." Within the SMEs. Similarly, organizational culture (OCul) plays a significant role in enhancing organizational commitment. Past research identified the decisive role of HR managers in fostering the optimal performance organizational culture. Such efforts by HR managers help in gaining and maintaining competitive advantages. Development of a productive organizational culture leads to efficient HR strategies and policies which further enhances organizational commitment. These HR practices include hiring, rewards and recognition and performance management plans (SHRM, 2019).

HR practices and organizational commitment are equally important for SMEs and larger firms. In the context of developing economies, SMEs play a vital role in economic growth. In Pakistan, SMEs are defined as "having at least 250 number of employees, paid-up capital up to 25 million and sales revenue up to 250 million per year (PKR)." SMEs are crucial in Pakistan's economy as over 90% of the total ventures in the country are SMEs, contribute about 40% of GDP and include 30% of the exports of the country (Zafar & Mustafa, 2017). Considering the contribution of SMEs in the economy, this study focuses on SMEs to find out the effects of HR practices on organization commitment. Furthermore, this study aims to innovatively explain the mediating role of organizational culture between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment.

This study highly correlates with the social exchange theory presented by Homans, Blau and Emerson. The theory suggests that employee interacts with the environment and society by conducting a cost-benefit analysis. The rewards extracted from the HR practices stimulate the employees to perform the organizational commitment behavior (Jonason & Middleton, 2015). Recruitment and selection, training, financial rewards and recognition positively benefit the employees to earn respect and association with the organization they serve; thus, they perform the organizational commitment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT
2.1. Organizational Commitment
Mowday et al. (1979) describes organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization." Organizational behavior literature promptly shows organizational commitment as an essential behavior towards the performance and relationship of employees. Also, the commitment of employees relates them to the organization (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). OC is further defined as the "employee's state of commitment to the organization, as well as the employee's identification with the organization's

values and goals (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Past research has mostly defined organizational commitment through the relationship of social exchange theory (for instance, (Alias, Mohd Rasdi, Ismail, & Abu Samah, 2013; Carville & Sudha, 2006)). If the organizations fulfill the psychological needs of the safety of employees, it motivates them to input their optimal efforts in their work (Kahn, 1990). Scholars have argued that the level of individual recognition within the organization develops the level of organizational commitment (Tuna, Ghazzawi, Tuna, & Catir, 2016). This study proposes the relationship of social exchange theory with organizational commitment.

2.2. Human Resource Practices

Recruitment & Selection is a renowned concept among researchers and practitioners of human resource management. HR departments of the firms play a significant role in the management and proposed planning (Derous & De Fruyt, 2016). Firms attract employees by using fundamental recruitment strategies to attract the most talented employees (Darrag, Mohamed, & Abdel, 2010). Furthermore, scholars argue that employees' organizational commitment increases through the details and effective recruitment and selection process in firms (Loganathan & Dharmaraj, 2017). Scholars have examined the positive and significant effects of recruitment and selection on OC (Bisharat, Obeidat, Tarhini, & Mukattash, 2017; Obeidat, Masa'deh, & Abdallah, 2014). Chew and Chan (2008) reported the positive impacts of HR practices such as person-oriented fit, remuneration, recognition and training and development on organizational commitment. In light of this discussion, this study proposes the relationship as follows:

Training: stimulates a good sense of career development and a safer work opportunity, which further develops the self-efficacy in employees (Guest, 2017). Training and development opportunities are considered as a critical investment in human assets to achieve personal and organizational betterment (Wentland, 2003). Another perspective of training relates to the alteration of insufficiencies of employees' job performing skills and development which is ultimately helpful for them in the future to achieve their organizational goals (Gold, 2001). Past research shows that training enhances the skills in employees to understand the organizational procedures and enhances their organizational commitment (Maheshwari & Vohra, 2015). Researchers such as Bisharat et al. (2017) have examined a positive and significant relationship between employee training and organizational commitment. Based on the evidences, this study proposes the relationship as follows:

Financial Rewards: is defined as "what employees receive in exchange for their contribution to the organization" (Cole, 2005). Among the HR practices, the reward dimension has an optimal correlation with job satisfaction and commitment of employees (Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & De Lange, 2010; Meyer & Becker, 2004). Financial rewards such as salary and benefits, enhance commitment and effectiveness. Rewards motivate employees to show loyalty, emotional attachment and commitment with the organization. Based on individual preferences, some employees prefer financial rewards over non-financial rewards (Grace, 2015). Some key factors that enhance organizational commitment include wages, salaries, work ethics, incentive system, morale, social values, psychological and social conditions of employees (Aina, 1993). A study by Taylor (2018) shows that pay and social recognition positively affect organizational commitment and turnover. Research in Pakistan's context examined that financial rewards positively influence organizational commitment (Saqib, Abrar, Sabir, Bashir, & Baig, 2015). Based on this discussion, we propose that:

Recognition: refers to the particular appraisal of employees' efforts, behaviors, actions and performance. Recognition includes both formal and informal programs to support corporate goals and reinforce specific behaviors (Nyakaro, 2016). Here, we focus on recognition through non-financial rewards which may include a verbal appraisal, certificates, trophies, tickets, public notifications and many others depending upon the policies of the organizations. Scholars found that recognition is superior to cash awards; also, from organizations, perspective recognition awards are suitable (Jeffrey & Shaffer, 2007) for instance, in SMEs having less financial resources. Organizational commitment increases through the HR practices of recognition of the accomplishment of employees. Past research has shown an extensive correlation between organizational commitment and recognition (Chew & Chan, 2008; Obeidat et al., 2014).

Recognition showed positive and significant impacts on the commitment of staff. Thus, recognition is of crucial importance (Nyakaro, 2016). Based on this discussion, we propose that:

H1: HR practices positively and significantly affects organizational commitment.

Similarly, HR practices have a significant relationship with organizational culture. HR Practices and organizational culture both impact the employees' behaviors and attitudes, ultimately affecting the corporate goals of the organizations. A significant relationship prevails between different types of organizational culture and HR practices Kosiorek and Szczepańska (2016). The human resource management environment has also been considered as an effective way to enhance the proffered and existing culture of the organizations (Dubkevics & Barbars, 2010). Authors argue that HR can positively and negatively affect the corporate culture of the organization. Several HR practices such as employee relations, compensation, workplace safety and effective leadership play a critical role in developing organizational culture (Mayhew, 2019). Aaron (2017) identified many HR practices that affect organizational cultures, such as compensation, pay, training and development, employee and employer relationships performance management and leadership. Culture defines a suitable way to think and behave within the organizations. HR strategies related to educating organizational leadership, pay systems, performance management, recruitment and selection and training and development positively and significantly impacts the organizational culture (HR, 2005).

H2: HR practices positively and significantly affects organizational culture.

2.3. Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to the "consistent, observable patterns of behavior in organizations." Another definition by Perrins defines that "organizational culture is the sum of values and rituals which serve as 'glue' to integrate the members of the organization" (Watkins, 2013). There is a positive relationship between organizational culture, organizational commitment, and affective commitment (Azizollah, Abolghasem, & Amin, 2016). Studies found that the dimension of organizational culture, such as future orientation and performance orientation significant impacts organizational commitment (Mitic, Vukonjanski, Terek, Gligorovic, & Zoric, 2016). Another study examined the positive impacts of organizational culture on organizational commitment in IT companies of Jordan (Aranki, Suifan, & Sweis, 2019). Literature shows that commitment by employees has a significant relationship with the relation and interaction with the organization, as well as the behavior of organizations' management with the employees. The practical strategies designed under the organizational culture, predict the organizational commitment of employees (Dwivedi, Kaushik, & Luxmi, 2014). As the result of organizational culture, it articulates several behaviors in employees, for instance increasing organizational commitment. A positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment was found by Carville and Sudha (2016). Based on the strong relationship between HR practices, organizational culture and organizational commitment, we propose that organizational culture can play a decisive mediation role between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment. Thus, we constructed the following hypothesis in this study:

H3: Organizational culture positively and significantly affects organizational commitment.

H4: Organizational culture positively and significantly mediates between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment.

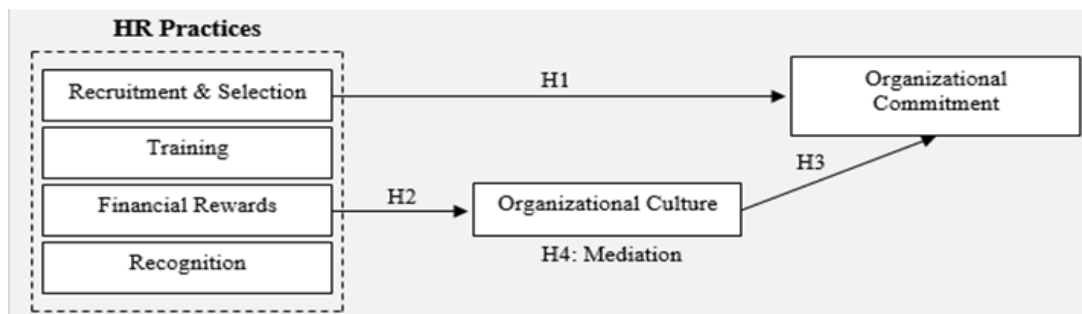Based on the above discussion we propose the following reseach framework:

Figure-1. Research framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study implies the quantitative approach of analysis based on the questionnaire data collection method. The study used a five-point Likert scale for questionnaire development. As indicated by Zafar and Mustafa (2017) 65.4 percent of SMEs in Pakistan are established in Punjab province; this study focused on SMEs located in twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad as population for data collection. 250 employees working in SMEs were contacted personally to respond to the constructed questionnaire. Smart PLS was used to perform a structured equation model (SEM) to examine the proposed relationships.

3.1. Measures

Organizational commitment was measured by the six items developed by Saks (2006). Within HR practices, recruitment and selection was measured by five items developed by Edgar and Geare (2005). Training was measured with six items developed by Karatepe and Vatankhah (2014). Recognition was measured with the six items developed by Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton, and Swart (2005) and Kooij et al. (2010). Financial rewards was measured with three items adapted from the study of (Grace, 2015). Organizational culture was measured with the GLOBE questionnaire (House et al., 1999; 2002; 2004).

3.2. Results

The descriptive statistics of the respondents are presented in Table 1 which shows the total number and variance in respondents according to age, gender, education, and number of years of experience in their professions in SMEs. A total of 223 questionnaires were found completely responded (89.2% response rate).

Table 1. Demographic Information (N=223).

Controls		Variance
Gender	Male	143 (64%)
	Female	80 (36%)
Age	20-30	87 (39%)
	31-40	69 (31%)
	41-50	45 (20%)
	51-60	22 (10%)
Education	High School	43 (19%)
	Bachelors	87 (39%)
	Masters	84 (38%)
	PhD	9 (4%)
Experience (No of years)	<1	25 (11%)
	1-5	63 (28%)
	6-10	53 (24%)
	11-15	61 (27%)
	>15	21 (9%)

Table-2. Measurement model discriminant validity.

		Items	Loading	CA[b]	CR[c]	AVE[d]	(Farnell-Larker Criterion)
OC		OC1	0.891	0.932	0.949	0.787	0.887*
		OC2	0.892				
		OC3	0.912				
		OC4	0.885				
		OC5	0.856				
Ocul		OCul1	0.868	0.819	0.860	0.609	0.781*
		OCul2	0.774				
		OCul3	0.640				
		OCul5	0.822				
HR Practices	F	F1	0.790	0.943	0.948	0.506	0.712*
		F2	0.767				
		F3	0.761				
	R&S	R&S1	0.738				
		R&S2	0.764				
		R&S3	0.727				
		R&S4	0.668				
		R&S5	0.629				
	R	R1	0.752				
		R2	0.779				
		R3	0.722				
		R4	0.728				
		R5	0.683				
	T	T1	0.678				
		T2	0.642				
		T3	0.683				
		T4	0.655				
		T5	0.604				

Note. a) All items loadings >0.5 indicate indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2011).

b) All average variance extracted (AVE) >0.5 indicates convergent reliability (Chin, 1998).

c) All composite reliability (CR) >0.7 indicates internal consistency (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988)

d) All Cronbach's alpha >0.7 indicates indicator reliability (Hinton et al., 2004)

Note. * The diagonals are the square root of AVE of the latent variables and indicates highest in column and row.

The outer loadings for the present study are according to the standards set by past research, which shows items loading should be 0.4 – 0.7. The items loading for the present study are presented in Table 2 which are a minimum of 0.604 and above (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The internal consistency reliability or composite reliability (CR) has been standardized by the researchers (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) to be 0.7 or above, in this study the CR for all three variables is

higher than 0.7 (ranges 0.860-0.949), presented in Table 2. The convergent validity of the items is determined by the average variance extracted (AVE). This study met the threshold of AVE (at least 0.5, presented in Table 2) as suggested by Chin (1998). Table 2 also exhibits the Cronbach Alpha (CA) values within the range of 0.7-0.9 as suggested by past research (Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray, & Cozens, 2004).

Discriminant validity (DV) values in Table 2 shows that the square roots of AVE are higher than 0.50, and the values of AVE are higher than the latent variable correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 3 presents the latent variable correlation. There is a positive relationship in HR practices and organizational commitment (0.843) between HR Practices and organizational culture (0.657) and between organizational culture and organizational commitment (0.457).

Table-3. Latent variable correlation.

Constructs	HR Practices	OC	Ocul
HR Practices	1	0.843	0.657
OC	0.843	1	0.457
Ocul	0.657	0.457	1

Note: * Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed).

The hypothesis constructs are presented in Table 4 below, which shows the beta, mean, standard deviation, t-values, p-values, and decisions for the hypothesis. *Hypothesis 1 (H1)* shows that HR practices positively and significantly affects organizational commitment with values, $\beta = 0.838$, $t = 38.043$, $P = 0.000$.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) depicts positive and significant relationship between HR practices and organizational culture with values, $\beta = 0.354$, $t = 6.325$, $P = 0.000$. *Hypothesis 3 (H3)* also shows positive and significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment with values $\beta = 0.133$, $t = 2.715$, $P = 0.007$. *Hypothesis 4 (H4)* shows that organizational culture positively and significantly mediates between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment with values, $\beta = 0.02$, $t = 2.168$, $P = 0.000$. All the findings of the study follows the rule of thumb $p<0.01$ and $t>2$. $R2$ depicted the coefficient of determination results.

Findings show that HR practices affect organizational commitment by 0.729 (72.9%) and organizational culture affects organizational commitment by 0.136 (13.6%). The study found both paths positive and significant towards organizational commitment.

Table-4. Hypothesis Constructs.

Hypothesis	BETA	Mean	SD	t-value	P-value	Decision
H_1: HR Practices -> OC	0.838**	0.844	0.022	38.043	0.000	Supported
H_2: HR Practices -> Ocul	0.354**	0.357	0.053	6.325	0.000	Supported
H_3: OCul -> OC	0.133**	0.127	0.049	2.715	0.007	Supported
H_4: HR Practices -> OCul -> OC	0.02**	0.023	0.015	2.168	0.000	Supported

4. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study aimed at finding the effects of human resource practices on organizational commitment; the findings of the study were supported by past research. For instance, recruitment and selection have positive and significant impact on organizational commitment supported by Darrag et al. (2010); Loganathan and Dharmaraj (2017); Bisharat et al. (2017); Obeidat et al. (2014) and Chew and Chan (2008).

Training also showed a positive relationship with OC which is supported by Bisharat et al. (2017). Financial rewards motivates and impacts OC positively supported by Kooij et al. (2010); Meyer and Becker (2004); Grace (2015); Aina (1993) and Saqib et al. (2015).

Similarly, recognition was also found positive and significant towards OC supported by Jeffrey and Shaffer (2007); Chew and Chan (2008); Obeidat et al. (2014) and Nyakaro (2016). Furthermore, this study found a positive and significant relationship between HR practices and organizational

culture which is supported by past research such as Kosiorek and Szczepańska (2016); Dubkevics and Barbars (2010); Mayhew (2019) and Aaron (2017).

This study also examined a direct positive relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment, supported by past studies such as Azizollah et al. (2016); Mitic et al. (2016); Aranki et al. (2019); Dwivedi et al. (2014) and Carville and Sudha (2006). This study also examined the positive and significant mediating role of organizational culture between the relationship of HR practices and organizational commitment. This study concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between the constructs of HR practices, organizational culture and organizational commitment.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study achieved its primary objectives. The study validates that organizational commitment increases by the chosen predictor. The other variables may mediate between the relationship of HR practice and organizational commitment such as alternative job opportunities, leadership behavior and quality of work life. Similarly, further analysis of the direct and indirect effects of the model using different techniques could be done in future research.

This study has practical implications for SMEs in Pakistan. Firms can enhance the organizational commitment in their employees by implementing HR practices suggested in this study. This study shows the significance of HR practices concerning organizational commitment and organizational culture.

Furthermore, this study also suggests that how organizations can optimize their commitment through productive organizational culture. Organizations can develop strategies of HR practices and organizational culture in light of this study.

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