Exploring the Nexus between Learning Organization Dimensions and Affective Commitment in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

The study was an attempt to examine the relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment as perceived by university teachers in Lahore. Quantitative approach was adopted while research design was co relational in nature. The sample of the study was teachers of public universities of Lahore. Sample was selected by using multistage sampling technique. Researcher used an adapted version of Learning Organization Dimensions Questionnaire (LODQ) developed by Marsick and Watkins (2003) and revised version of Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer and Allen (2004). Data was analyzed by applying frequency, mean, standard deviation and Pearson product moment correlation. Results of data analysis of current study show that there exist positive moderate and significant relationship between seven learning organization dimensions and affective commitment, except the sixth dimension, empowerment. Finding of the study showed that the development of organizational affective commitment enhanced by increasing individuals' organizational learning inclination. Therefore, there is need to incorporate practices to enhance the organizational learning inclination of the employees.

Keywords: Learning organization dimensions, Affective commitment, university teachers

Introduction

Learning organization spirit is the consumption of the skilled workforce, motivation for the best and knowledge management. Knowledge management is the base of learning organization. It is an individual's continuous approach towards progressive and creative learning atmosphere by best possible use of resources of organization and from upward to downward proper usage of knowledge to streamline organizational goals with individual's goals. Along with knowledge management individuals for learning organization needs to be ready to support new transformations. Learning organizations require individuals who are intellectually curious about their work, utilize personal experiences and take initiatives for contribution towards knowledge development, dynamically reproduce their experience and develop theories of change on the basis of their experience (Santos & Morais, 2023). Weldy (2009) argued that improvement in training transformation may prove to be significant factors for improved learning, better knowledge management, improvement in organizational and individuals' performance and to maintain in turbulent market a competitive benefit as being a learning organization.

Sometimes unconscious organizational assumptions constitute a point of departure to understand that what approach we will adopt to theorize and perform efficiently as they are subjacent to all action and theory (Rafiq, Kamran, & Afzal, 2024). Contrary to the mechanical organization with formal systems, rigid culture, routine tasks, vertical structure and competitive strategy, a new organizational concept where people are empowered, information is shared, culture is adaptive and structure is horizontal was evolved since nineteen nineties (Rafiq, Kamran & Afzal, 2023). Learning is an integral, basic and vital part of values, vision, behaviors, goals, practices, policies and systems of learning organization (Rafiq, Khadim, & Afzal, 2023). Logo of learning organization is continuous learning for all. All members of learning organization are facilitated to be learned continuously as it is the consciously executed effort on the part of management by focusing on learning. Moreover, to shift to a learning organization from an ordinary organization, there are four stages which are "activity organization, problem organization, value organization and then finally a learning organization" (Kim & Lee, 2023; Rafiq, Iqbal, & Afzal, 2024). Malik, et al., (2012) stated that in developing countries like Pakistan, due to individuals' reluctance to adopt new changes and advancements because of their negative approach for organization, mostly organization suffers a lot (Rafiq, Afzal, & Kamran, 2022). Theoretical frame of the study was Watkins and Marsick (1993) integrative model for learning organization presented in their book "Sculpting the learning organization" with seven discrete but inter connected dimensions at three levels individual, team and at organizational level. Egan *et al.* (2004) stated that these dimensions are associated with people and structure. These seven distinct learning organization dimensions are "(1) continuous learning, (2) dialogue and inquiry, (3) collaboration, (4) embedded system, (5) empowerment, (6) system connection, (7) strategic leadership". There exist some important characteristics of Watkins and Marsicks's model which cannot be found in other models. According to Chajnacki (2007) first characteristics of Watkins and Marsicks's model is their insight as educators instead of managers which makes them able to focus on employee based individualistic strategies as compare to on issues dealing with organizational strategies structure or power. Secondly, a survey instrument (LODQ) also accompanied with this comprehensive model.

Commitment towards organization plays a vital role and is necessary in forming integrated human efforts in the organization. Over recent decades, considerable attraction has been given to organizational commitment and reflected in management research studies by the researchers. In a study by Mutasim and Hizam (2002) it was revealed that professional commitment is compatible with commitment to organization. They found that there exists no conflict between individuals' commitment with their profession and their commitment with organization. Ju (2008) found that a significant, positive relationship among fringe and mandatory benefits with organizational commitment. They also found that fringe benefits have strong relation with organizational commitment as compare to mandatory benefits. Li and Wang (2023) stated that Emotional attachment, involvement and identification with organization can be defined as affective commitment. They affirmed that individuals continue employment who posses' strong affective commitment because they wish to continue. Moreover, continuance commitment is the understanding of the cost individuals linked with leaving the organization. Individuals with continuance commitment get remained in the organization as they ought to be. Normative commitment was defined as a sense of emotions of responsibility to remain employed. Individuals with well-built normative commitment continue employment as they ought to (Khalil & Abouzeid, 2023).

Some researchers empirically studied learning organization dimensions and organizational commitment correlation. Researches of many scholars have found that taking part in learning and training activities enhance employee's organizational commitment (Nguyen & Pham, 2023). Higher education institutes yet not learnt to organize and efficiently utilize data for public accountability and internal environment to become a learning organization (Rafiq, 2024; Zhang & Li, 2023).

To enhance the commitment of the employees towards the organization, learning organization dimensions are necessary elements which need to be understood by the management (Khadim, Jamil & Rafiq, 2023). This phenomenon is based on the truth that enhanced people learning makes their performance better when they grow up. While reviewing the literature, researcher found few studies done by researchers in Pakistani context. *Considering the importance of the problem and to fill the gap in present literature, it looked imperative to examine the problem in the area of university education. Therefore, present research work was an effort to examine the correlation between learning organization dimensions and organizational commitment in Pakistani university set-up.*

Objectives of the Research

Focus of present research work was to determine the relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment.

Major objectives were to:

1. Examine the level as perceived by university teachers regarding learning organization dimensions.
2. Examine the level as perceived by university teachers regarding affective commitment.
3. Determine the relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment as perceived by university teachers.

Research Question

Following research question guided the current research study.

1. What is the level of learning organizational dimensions as perceived by university teachers?
2. What is the level of affective commitments as perceived by university teachers?
3. Does there exist a significant relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment at university level?

Methodology

Population and Sampling: Correlational research design was used to determine the, relationship between learning organization dimensions and organizational commitment, at university level in Lahore. Population of the study was consisted of teachers of all public universities of Lahore. Thus, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors of selected common faculties/departments (natural sciences, art and social sciences, languages and Islamic studies) serving in public universities of Lahore comprised the population of the study. Multi stage sampling technique was utilized to select the sample of the present study. At first stage, two universities were selected conveniently. At second stage, convenient sampling technique was used to select the common faculties/ departments of public universities of Punjab. At third stage stratified random sampling technique was used to collect the data from the respondents of selected common departments of universities of Punjab. Thus, the sample of the study was comprised of 387.

Instrumentation: Researcher used an adapted version of Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer and Allen (2004) and Learning Organization Dimensions Questionnaire (LODQ) developed by Watkins and Marsickin (2003). Through experts' opinions, the instruments were validated and a pilot study on a small sample was conducted. In present study, Cronbach's alpha was utilized by the researcher to measure the reliability which is an extensively used indicator of reliability. The reliability of both instruments was 0.73 and 0.88 Cronbach's Alpha of LODQ and OCQ respectively which lies in acceptable range to conduct the study (Gay, 2000).

Data Analysis: To collect the data, finalized instrument of the study were used and survey on large scale was conducted. Package for survey consisted of a cover letter by the researcher requesting the university teachers and their heads to assist the researcher in collecting the data. Data was analyzed by applying frequency, mean, standard deviation and Pearson product moment correlation. Since for DLOQ five-point Likert scale was used, the levels were determined as, since one was the possible lowest mean score and five as the possible highest mean score, therefore difference between highest and lowest mean score was four. Range was determined by dividing the difference (four) to the level (3 i.e. high, moderate and low) by getting the result as 1.33. So, starting from lowest i.e. 1 and adding on 1.33 each time level range was calculated as shown in table 1.

Descriptive statistics for the perception level regarding overall learning organization dimension LOD

Range	Levels
1--2.33	L
2.34--3.66	M

3.67--5	H

L=Low, M= Medium, H= High

Perceptions level of university teachers: Table 2 shows the perception level of university teachers among their universities for seven dimensions of learning organization. Table 2 shows that all seven dimensions were at moderate level of mean score. Second dimension, "Dialogue and Inquiry", M=3.55, SD=1.22 has the highest moderate level of mean score. Seventh dimension "Strategic Leadership" has mean score M=3.41, SD=1.14 was the dimension with second highest mean score. This was followed by fifth dimension "Embedded system", M=3.34, SD=1.22 and sixth dimension "System connections" M=3.22, SD= 1.13, third dimension "Collaboration" has mean score M= 3.17, SD=1.06, and first dimension "Continuous Learning" M=3.04, SD=1.24. Fourth dimension ": Empowerment" M=3.03, SD=1.19 has the least mean score. Overall mean score was M=3.25, SD=1.22, shows a moderate level. None of the dimension was rated as low level. This shows that at university level teachers are provided with learning organization dimensions at moderate level.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the perception level regarding overall learning organization dimension LOD

Statements	*Mean*	*SD*	*Levels*
Continuous Learning	3.04	1.24	M
Dialogue and Inquiry	3.55	1.22	M
Collaboration	3.17	1.06	M
Empowerment	3.03	1.19	M
Embedded system	3.34	1.22	M
System connections	3.22	1.13	M
Strategic Leadership	3.41	1.14	M
Overall	3.25	1.22	M

N=387, M= Moderate, SD= Standard deviation

Table 3 shows the affective commitment level of university teachers. Results showed that university teachers possessed high perception level on affective commitment with mean score as M=3.74, SD = 1.09.

Table 3.

Descriptive statistics for the perception level regarding affective organizational commitment.

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*Levels*
Affective commitment	3.74	1.09	H

N=999, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, H= High

Relationship between Learning Organization Dimensions and affective Commitment

H01: There exists no significant relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment (AC)

Pearson product moment correlation was applied to test the research hypothesis "There exists no significant relationship between learning organization dimensions and Affective commitment (AC)". Results of data analysis showed that there exist significant and positive relationship between learning organization dimensions and affective commitment, so the null hypothesis was retained. Results revealed that the highest and moderate significant relationship exists between D7: strategic leadership and affective commitment (r= .459, p=.000). Results revealed that moderate positive correlation coefficient of 0.459 shows that as the score for strategic leadership increase same will happen with affective commitment. The second highest positive, moderate and linear relationships found between D2: dialogue and inquiry and affective commitment (r= .451, p=.000) followed by relationship between D1: continuous learning and affective commitment as (r= .423, p=.000) shows a moderate, positive linear relationship. A positive moderate and linear relationship exist among D4: Embedded system and affective commitment (r= .363, p=.000), between D6: System connections and affective commitment (r= .324, p=.000), and between D3: collaboration and affective commitment as (r= .308, p=.000). Lastly, data analysis showed positive and low relationship among D5: empowerment and affective commitment as (r= .216, p=.000). Overall, a significant, positive, strong relationship was found among the two variables (r= 0.598) which shows that learning organization dimensions are a source to increase the affective commitment. Cohen (2007) referred that "correlation values between 0.50 to 1 shows high correlation, 0.30 to 0.49 shows moderate range and 0.1 to 0.29 indicates low correlation among variables".

Table 4

Correlations of Learning Organization and Affective Commitment

Ds	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	AC
D1	1							
D2	.423**	1						
D3	.195**	.295**	1	.				
D4	.489**	.233**	.260**	1				
D5	.219**	.093**	.290**	.181**	1			
D6	.299**	.364**	.189**	.172**	.130**	1		
D7	.344**	.212**	.287**	.461**	.233**	.219**	1	
AC	.423**	.451**	.308**	.363**	.216**	.324**	.459**	1

**. Significant correlation at 0.01 level (2-tailed), D1= continuous learning, D2= Dialogue and inquiry, D3= Collaboration, D4= Embedded system, D5= Empowerment, D6= System connection, D7= Strategic leadership, AC= Affective commitment

Discussion and Conclusions: Results of present study was supported by the literature. Overall, results of the data analysis showed a moderate level of perceptions of university teachers on learning organization dimensions. Results of data analysis of current study show that there exist positive significant and moderate relationship between seven learning organization dimensions and affective, except the sixth dimension, empowerment. Findings of the study suggested that our higher education institutes i.e. universities are not paying due attention towards dimensions of learning organization. Dehghanpour and Kazemi (2022) research study in Malaysia and Zhao and Lei (2022) also found the same research results and reported a positive moderate and significant correlation except a weak relationship between inquiry and dialogue and affective commitment. Jafari & Moradi (2022) *studied the correlation among organizational commitment and learning organization at university level. Study revealed a positive relationship among affective commitment and*

learning organization. Current study is also aligned with Lin and Chen (2022) who reported a strong correlation among organization learning capability and affective organizational commitment. Asghar & Rehman (2022) in their research study reported that when staff is provided with a high level of learning culture, their commitment with organization enhanced. Moreover, another research study found a positive correlation among organizational learning, guest relations, adaptive behavior and affective organizational commitment" (Abdekhodaie & Merlo, 2022). *Present research work revealed significant outcomes for practitioners including university administrators, top executives and faculty members in higher education institutions.* The results of current research work have mixed applications as it speaks about practice, theory and research. Definitely in present era of advancement, the world is facing the dominance of learning organization paradigm that is offering hope rays with an in-depth analysis particularly for those organizations challenging in unstable environment especially in developing countries like our country Pakistan. It is worth saying that the learning and the learning organization are not the wishful thoughts but a very potential path leading approach to Sustainable Competitive Advantage. It is an invariable odyssey of an endless passion for ever-growing progress towards excellence. Other value creation sources could be copied but learning is something that could not be copied and so it is vital – imperative. Development of organizational commitment enhanced by increasing individuals' organizational learning inclination. Therefore, there is need to incorporate practices to enhance the organizational learning inclination of the individuals.

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