

Impact of Leadership Behavior on Organizational Commitment at University Level

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of leadership behavior on organizational commitment among university faculty in Lahore. The higher-education sector in Pakistan has undergone rapid expansion and reform, placing new demands on academic leaders to guide, motivate, and retain qualified staff. This research focuses on three dimensions of leadership behavior task-oriented, relation-oriented, and laissez-faire and their influence on employees' organizational commitment, conceptualized as affective, continuance, and normative commitment. A quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design was employed. Despite extensive global research, limited empirical work has examined how leadership behavior functions in Pakistan's academic context. This study fills that gap by employing a quantitative survey of faculty members across public and private universities in Lahore. Using validated instruments and rigorous statistical analysis, the research aims to determine which leadership behaviors most strongly predict organizational commitment. The results are expected to enrich theoretical understanding of leadership-commitment dynamics and provide actionable insights for university governance and human-resource development.

Keywords: Leadership Behavior, Task-Oriented Leadership, Relation-Oriented Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment, Higher Education, Pakistan

Introduction

Leadership is also one of the most important phenomena that determine the success of an institution and the way employees perform. The concept of leadership has over the centuries changed into an influential process and shared vision as opposed to that of power. Leadership behavior in the contemporary organizations especially in universities serves as an engine of aligning the individual interests with the organizational interests. It determines the way managers, the leaders of departments, and academic administrators coordinate the work of the faculty, allocate resources, and encourage teachers to strive to professional excellence. Leadership behavior cannot be simply described as a managerial role but a complicated social process that defines organizational culture and levels of commitment. Alkahtani (2016) and other scholars highlighted that leadership behavior incorporates management attitudes, interpersonal skills and ethical roles that relate the concerns of leaders and subordinates. Leadership behavior has direct impact in academic motivation and institutional growth in the long term in universities where innovation and production of knowledge requires teamwork. Leadership behavior has generally been described as a pattern of action whereby leaders can use to influence the subordinates in order to accomplish organizational goals (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Studies have over time differentiated three general orientations namely, task-oriented, relation-oriented and laissez-faire. Task-oriented behavior focuses on planning, role definition, goal setting, and performance monitoring in order to have the tasks performed efficiently. Relation-oriented behavior is concerned with trust building, care about the well-being of the followers, and collaborative promotion. Instead, laissez-faire leadership displays the non-decisive, low communication, and dumping of responsibility (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Task-oriented leadership is based on some of the early behavioral models like the Multifactor leadership behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) by Stogdill that emphasized initiating structure as the important role of good leaders. Empirical studies have a consistent finding that task clarity and performance feedback improves the understanding of the role and productivity of the employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Leaders in higher education are highly procedural, that is, they set clear assessment standards, distribute teaching tasks fairly, and provide consistency in procedures.

Relation-oriented leadership is more concerned with human relationship and socio-emotional care. Listening, empathy, and engagement of the subordinates in decision-making by leaders encourage trust and psychological safety. Such leaders are respectful and show individual concern through consideration dimension of the MLB framework. Research in industries proves the relation-oriented behavior to be strongly associated with affective commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship (Behrendt et al., 2016). Khan and Javed (2020) found in Pakistan that faculty in relationally supportive head positions were more loyal and had reduced turnover intentions.

Laissez-faire leadership, however, is a non-leadership style which involves shirking of responsibility. Leaders with laissez-faire behavior are laissez-faire leaders who do not offer guidance and do not receive feedback as well do not give expectations to their subordinates. The negative impact of it can be proved extensively Gul and Rehman (2019) found that passive

leadership at public universities was negatively related to faculty commitment. Essentially, laissez-faire style of leadership weakens performance and loyalty because it denies employees direction and appreciation.

The second significant variable in this research Organizational commitment has emerged as one of the burning research issues in the higher education sector of Pakistan. Contract-based appointments, restrictive career progression, and work-life imbalance are some of the issues that result in retention in public and private universities. Ali and Rasool (2018) also reported a moderate level of affective commitment among university instructors since most of the participants reported a lack of appreciation of academic contribution. Naz and Khan (2019) emphasized continuance commitment as the most prevailing form in which employees remain attached to their institutions because of job security and financial rewards and not because their employers motivate them. These results indicate that leadership styles are required that transcend the relationship of transactional interactions to foster emotional and ethical connections.

According to recent research in the United Kingdom and Malaysia, the supportive leadership climates contribute to the strengthening of the affective and normative commitment, whereas the controlling environments promote the continuance commitment (Maia et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2014). Therefore, commitment is one of the best antecedents of leadership behavior. Employees, when they see that leaders are fair, recognizing, and having participative dialogue, will view these as an expression of respect and reciprocity, which will result in emotional attachment and moral loyalty. On the contrary, the lack of a consistent communication system or careless leadership can undermine the trust of the employees, thus, undermining the level of commitment. Interaction of leadership behavior with commitment in organizations has been discussed in various settings but there are still gaps in context especially in South Asian higher education. The social and emotional climate that affects the process of commitment is dependent on the leadership behavior.

Although there is a lot of literature in other countries, there is not much empirical research done in Pakistan that has examined these two constructs in combination especially among the university-going students. Majority of local research either investigates the leadership styles in general or commitment as a product of organizational culture as opposed to certain leadership behaviors. The Pakistani university environment is not similar to the corporate environment based on the fact that it is bureaucratic in nature, has freedom of expression and is held accountable to both the regulating bodies and the management of the institution. The studies in this field are also relevant to policy making. Faculty development is a priority of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), but aspects of leadership are not extensively covered in institutional analysis. Findings of the research can inform administrators to develop leadership development workshops and mentoring systems that increase faculty retention and satisfaction. There is scarcity of empirical studies that involve the combination of both task and relation orientations with the laissez-faire behavior to study the combined effect on the multidimensional model of organizational commitment. Along with that, there is little information on the way these behaviors might be manifested in the academic culture of the universities in Lahore where institutional pressures, insufficiency of resources, and changes in the requirements of quality assurance pose their own challenges to leadership practice. This gap will also contribute to good local scholarship and offer practical input on university governance.

This is why the current research is expected to investigate how the leadership behavior influences the organizational commitment of the faculty members in a university in Lahore. By finding out what leadership behaviors are most effective in enhancing affective, continuance and normative commitment, it aims at finding out the differences between behavioral orientation by the type of institution. The study brings value to the field of educational management in Pakistan through the bridging of the behavioral leadership theory and the commitment research.

Research Objectives and Questions

The overarching objective of this study is to determine the extent to which leadership behavior impact on organizational commitment among university teachers.

1. To examine teachers' perceptions of task-oriented, relation-oriented, and laissez-faire leadership behaviors.
2. To assess the levels of affective, continuance, and normative commitment among faculty members.
3. To analyze the relationships between the dimensions of leadership behavior and the components of organizational commitment.
4. Explore the impact of leadership behavior on organizational commitment at university level.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of teachers regarding leadership behaviors on organization commitment among university level?
2. What are the relationships between leadership behavior dimensions and organizational commitment components among university level?
3. What is the impact of leadership behavior on organizational commitment at university level?
4. Is there any difference in Leadership behavior on the basis of demographic variable (Age, Gender, Qualification and University)?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework on relationship of LB and OC



These theoretical implications and the gap in the empirical research are combined in the conceptual framework of the current study. The current study in the country has focused on leadership styles either alone or gauged organizational commitment without distinguishing between the subcomponents of the latter. In the same vein, few of the studies in Pakistan have been able to evaluate all three leadership behaviors; task-oriented, relation-oriented, and laissez-faire, in a single empirical model. This paper fills that gap by providing a conceptual connection where every behavior of leadership serves as an independent variable and three dimensions of commitment are the dependent ones.

This paper has provided a theoretical underpinning of the present research based on the Social Exchange Theory introduced by Blau (1964) stating that organizations are run by mutually reciprocal exchange processes. The employees feel obliged to the leaders who offer support, recognition and fairness and will put in commitment. This reciprocity justifies the fact that relation-oriented behavior in terms of empathy and open communication creates more affective and normative relationships. The Social Exchange Theory therefore gives a rational process between the leadership behavior and the three-component model of organizational commitment that was formulated by Meyer and Allen (1991). Collectively, the theories create a formidable conceptual framework that establishes a connection between employee emotional, calculative, and moral attachment and the actions of the leader.

Methodology

The present research was based on the Positivist paradigm of research which presupposes that the reality is objective, stable and can be measured with the help of empirical observation. The research design used in this study is causal comparative research design under quantitative research approach. The study used a cross-sectional approach as the researcher sought to capture the faculty perception at one time and not over several years.

The population under study was full-time and contractual faculty members working in the University of the Punjab as well as University of Management and Technology and University of Lahore were studied population of Public and Private sector.

The stratified random sampling of the 310 faculty members was done in such a way that both the public (51.6%) and the private (48.4) universities were equally represented. The simple random sampling was applied to invite faculty in various departments within each stratum. The sample used was larger than the minimum sample size recommended by Cohen (1992) to use in multiple regression ($N = 200$ and above to have a medium effect size), and was sufficient to provide statistical power.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire that was subdivided into three parts was used to collect data. The initial section involved the demographic information like gender, age, university and qualification. The second part was the leadership behavior and the third part were the organizational commitment. Both parts used the already tested and valid scales based on the previous studies. The Leadership behavior was assessed with the help of Multifactor Leadership behavior Questionnaire (MLQS) first developed by Stogdill (1963) and changed by Avolio and Bass (2002) to incorporate the current dimensions of behavior. The scale included statements connected to task-oriented behavior (clarity, supervision, performance focus), relation-oriented behavior (trust, communication, empathy), and laissez-faire behavior (avoidance, lack of direction).

The Organizational commitment was measured on the basis of Meyer and Allen (1991) Organizational Commitment Scale that consists of affective, continuance and normative subscales. Some of the items included in the instrument are, I feel emotionally attached to this university (affective), It would be expensive to leave this institution (continuance), and I feel an obligation to remain with my institution (normative). Similar to the leadership scale, every single item was rated using a five-point Likert scale.

The pilot test was done using a small sample of 30 faculty members in one public and one private university who were not part of the final sample. Each subscale was tested using the Cronbach alpha to test internal consistency. The alpha values were all above the acceptable level of 0.70 which means there is satisfactory reliability.

The data collection continued in the institutions chosen after pilot validation. The researcher went to the individual universities and administered printed questionnaires to the participants to ensure the highest response rates were achieved and the questions of the participants clarified.

The analysis of data was conducted in systematic order to be accurate. The responses obtained were coded and keyed into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 to be analyzed. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic variables and trends of variables, which were part of preliminary screening. Cronbach alpha coefficients were re-calculated in every subscale to check internal consistency of the main data. After that, the hypothesized relationships were analyzed with the help of inferential statistics. The conclusion of the correlation analysis by Pearson was the direction and the strength of the relationship between the behavior of leaders and organizational commitment dimensions.

Findings, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendation

The research problem was to investigate the relationship between the aspects of leadership behavior such as task-oriented, relation-oriented, and laissez-faire dimensions with organizational commitment such as affective, continuance, and normative dimensions among the faculty of the university in Lahore.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	172	55.5
	Female	138	44.5
Sector	Public	160	51.6
	Private	150	48.4
Age	Below 30	60	19.4
	30-40	120	38.7
	40-50	90	29.0
	Above 50	40	12.9
Qualification	MPhil	165	53.2
	Phd	145	46.7

The sample was a group of male and female faculty with a wider age range and career stages. These levels of demographic diversity provide external validity of results.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Behavior and Organizational Commitment

Variable	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Tg.OL	3.92	1.63	-0.12	-0.05
ROL	4.05	1.58	-0.35	0.10
LF	2.36	1.71	0.48	0.65
MLQS	44.5	2.60	-0.35	0.10
AC	3.76	1.67	-0.12	-0.05
CC	3.88	1.65	-0.12	-0.05
NC	1.26	1.33	0.58	0.75
OC	54.8	3.60	-0.45	0.20

Relation-oriented leadership received the highest rating from respondents ($M = 4.05$) indicating that their academic heads provided them with emotional support and excellent interpersonal communication. Additionally, task-oriented leadership received a high score ($M = 3.92$) demonstrating goal clarity and organized planning. Laissez-faire leadership had the lowest score ($M = 2.36$) suggesting that there was little indication of avoidant or passive leadership. Affective commitment had the highest mean ($M = 4.02$) among the commitment dimensions, followed by normative and continuance commitments. The OC values were ($M=54.8$) and the possible MLQS score was ($M=44.5$). The findings indicate that university faculty members have generally favorable opinions of leadership and loyalty levels.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations between Leadership Behavior and Organizational Commitment

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
TOB	—					
ROL	.63**	—				
LF	-.41**	-.37**	—			
AC	.54**	.67**	-.36**	—		
CC	.49**	.52**	-.32**	.58**	—	
NC	.46**	.63**	-.28**	.70**	.61**	—

Relation-oriented leadership was found to have strong positive correlations with both normative commitment ($r = .63$) and affective commitment ($r = .67$). All commitment components exhibited moderate correlations with task-oriented leadership ($r = .46-.54$) suggesting that structured management strengthens workers' bonds with their company. Commitment and laissez-faire leadership had a negative correlation, indicating that faculty loyalty is weakened by passivity and a lack of feedback.

Table 4*Impact of leadership behavior on organizational commitment*

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adj <i>R</i> ²	St. Error	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
1	.688	.474	.469	.4051	15.7	.00

Predictor: (Constant)=Leadership Behavior

Dependent: (Variable)=Organizational Commitment

This exhibited that of the regression analysis with LB value as predictor of OC value. The summary exposes how considerable modification in OC (DV) is explicated by LB (IV). As per to this model, the score is .47 which designates that 47% modification in the OC (DV) is explained by LB. The model was statistically significant, ($R^2 = .474$), (Adjusted $R^2 = .469$), ($F = 15.76$), ($p = .00$). OC was statistically significant ($\beta = .651$, $p < .00$)

Table 5*ANOVA Summary for Regression Model*

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
	21.713	.185		6.265	.00
LB	1.429	.048	.651	7.511	.00

Dependent Variable: OC

Table 5 offers data obligatory to predict OC from LB. It was related that LB represent significantly to the regression equation. The designated that OC was related with a higher level of LB.

Discussion

The results of this research are quite convincing and strong to present a definite answer to the question that the behavior of leadership is influential in defining the organizational commitment among professors within the university in Lahore. The quantitative study has shown that task-oriented and relation-oriented leadership behaviors have a significant and positive impact on the three dimensions of commitment, which are affective, continuance, and normative, with laissez-faire leadership having a negative effect. The findings support the theoretical assumptions made based on Social Exchange.

Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Three-Component Model of Commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991) which determined that leadership behavior was an important precursor of faculty loyalty and emotional attachment in higher education. The important association between the relation-oriented leadership and affective commitment implies that interpersonal trust, empathy, and free communication are key sources of commitment. When the faculty members have a real concern and felt supported by their leaders, they feel valued and respected which enhanced their emotional attachment to the institution. This result is in line with past global studies. As an example, Behrendt et al., (2016) discovered that relation-oriented leaders also sustain climates of psychological safety, which leads to the cultivation of affective connections with employees. Likewise, Kim and Bryant (2019) have found that members of the faculty in South Korean universities were more likely to show a sense of organizational commitment when they perceived their supervisors to be approachable and communicative with them. Khan and Javed (2020) reported that supporting leadership was of significant importance to promote faculty engagement and commitment among Pakistani universities at the national level. The present research builds on this evidence by showing that relational leadership still has an effect in the

resource-deprived environment of the universities of Lahore where emotional support tends to neutralize the structural constraints. This argues the point that in the collectivist cultures, social harmony and personal respect play a vital role in how the employees consider the quality of leadership. Task-oriented leadership, also, had a significant positive correlation with commitment, especially continuance commitment. Planning, overseeing performance, and procedural fairness are some of the characteristics of effective leaders that enable faculty members to feel that they have a predictable safe job. This kind of structure offers psychological security, and it promotes long-term affiliation. The result is consistent with the inferences by Yukl and Gardner (2020), who pointed out that proper goals setting and clarity of tasks increase employee retention. At the local level, Rafique and Iqbal (2021) also discovered that when departmental heads convey their expectations and follow-up with constructive feedback, they make teachers feel a sense of professional responsibility and attachment. The existing findings confirm that effective leadership has to do with clarity of direction and procedural integrity as an important leadership role of Pakistani academia. Laissez-faire leadership on the other hand influenced all three commitment dimensions quite negatively. The members of the faculty that cited passive or nonresponsive leaders had reduced affective and normative commitment as well as weaker continuance motivation. This trend is in line with international results by Skogstad et al. (2017) who showed that laissez-faire leaders impose ambiguity and stress which destroy commitment. Likewise, Gul and Rehman (2019) discovered that the lowest satisfaction and loyalty of teachers were predicted by passive leadership in a sample of Pakistani teachers. The current findings support the view that leadership lack is non-neutral and it actually destabilizes organizational unity by indicating laxity, and lack of concern. Such inattention in the learning institutions where intrinsic motivation and mentorship are valued, is detrimental at best. The overall organizational commitment was explained (with a 46% variance) with the combined regression model which significantly supports the substantive importance of leadership behavior on the faculty attitudes. This is similar to the reported values in international research, namely, Jena and Pradhan (2021) have reported an $R^2 = 0.43$ in the Indian universities and Kim and Bryant (2019) report similar values in the South Korean setting. This uniformity within national contexts underscores the applicability of leadership behavior as a predictor of employee commitment as a universal concept, but the comparative value of each leadership dimension may vary depending on cultural practices. Contextual specificities of the Pakistani higher-education system can also be observed in the results. Theoretically, the findings support the explanatory capacity of the Social Exchange Theory. Faculty members perceive the supportive leadership behavior as a type of organizational investment and reciprocate the response through loyalty. The results are also consistent with the multifaceted model of Meyer and Allen (1991), according to which normative commitment is reinforced by moral leadership, continuance commitment is reinforced by structural stability, and affective commitment is reinforced by emotional exchange. When taken as a whole, these frameworks clarify how leadership behaviors relate to the psychological processes that maintain faculty engagement.

The relationship between task-oriented and relation-oriented leadership is another important implication. Although both are important predictors on their own, faculty members who thought their leaders were supportive and structured showed the highest levels of commitment. This synergy implies that the ideal leadership profile in higher education is one that strikes a balance between interpersonal relationships and managerial effectiveness. Leaders who only concentrate

on structure run the risk of coming across as inflexible, while those who priorities relationships over accountability run the risk of becoming lost.

The demographic results offer more information. Most of the participants were academics in the middle of their careers, ages 31 to 50, with five to ten years of experience. Because this demographic cohort consists of people who are still developing a professional identity attachment, they are especially receptive to leadership behavior. Effective leadership during these career stages can have long-lasting effects on institutional loyalty, according to the group's high affective-commitment scores.

Additionally, the study supports the cross-cultural validation of Western commitment and leadership models in non-Western contexts. The structural relationships seen here are similar to those in East Asian and Western contexts, despite cultural orientation differences, indicating that leadership behavior has psychological effects that are universal. However, relational dynamics are given more weight in Pakistan's collectivist culture, suggesting that empathy and respect are particularly important leadership traits.

Lastly, the results highlight how crucial leadership behavior is strategically to attaining organizational effectiveness in higher education. Student satisfaction, research productivity, and teaching quality are all directly impacted by faculty commitment. As a result, leadership is a key factor in determining institutional excellence rather than just a managerial duty. University administrators can develop a dedicated academic staff that can provide high-quality instruction by carefully implementing balanced behavioral styles.

Implications

This study confirms that reciprocal trust functions similarly in collectivist cultures by extending Social Exchange Theory into an academic context in South Asia. By incorporating the detrimental consequences of a laissez-faire approach into the behavioral continuum, it also enhances leadership-behavior theory.

Leadership-behavior standards ought to be incorporated into faculty evaluation and accreditation procedures by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC). Retention and institutional efficacy can be enhanced by policies that support a culture of mentoring and feedback.

Recommendations

To professionalize university administration, create national leadership certification programs for academic heads. Incorporate leadership-behavior metrics into HEC-monitored quality-assurance frameworks. For ongoing skill development, major universities should set up leadership mentoring centers. Encourage cross-departmental initiatives that advance common objectives to foster collaborative leadership. Encourage a moral, welcoming environment where equity and respect for one another fortify institutional identity and normative commitment.

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