

Leveraging the Wow Culture at Work to Witness the Journey of Disconnection to Devotion

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Abstract

Purpose: The study in hand observed the concept of employee engagement and its contribution on the overall wellness of employees at workplace. Employee engagement has emerged as a crucial aspect in organizational success, correlating with efficiency, retention, and overall performance. **Research Methodology:** The study in hand investigated total 250 sample size via using PLS 4 technique. The questionnaire was distributed among the academic staff of the public sector universities of Punjab and the capital territory of Pakistan, Islamabad. **Findings and Conclusion:** This study highlighted significance of organizational justice, job crafting, and workplace belongingness on employee engagement, these factors had a positive contribution in relation with engagement but appreciative leadership doesn't seem any significant impact. Moreover, a moderating influence exists between job crafting and employee engagement, underscoring the significance of this research in comprehending and enhancing employee engagement. **Originality/value:** This study specifically highlights the importance of appreciative leadership in relation with the concept of employee engagement and the results are providing valuable insights regarding the sustaining positivity at workplace.

Keywords: *Organizational Justice; Employee Engagement; Job Crafting; Workplace Belongingness; Appreciative Leadership.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Consider working in a nation where regular wages and job stability are less guaranteed. Your administration or employer informs you that your salary will be paid late, often months later, even though you report to work every day. The nation also faces severe economic difficulties and a protracted political turmoil. Assume you have a spouse, kids, and a family. Would you find working here to be an appealing environment? We presume that the obvious response to this query is no.

The preceding vignette serves as the starting point for our study, which is set in a developing country such as Pakistan, where political and economic instability has resulted in a constant crisis. The market lacks skilled workers, and many professions provide few opportunities for advancement or higher pay. Organizations encounter a paradoxical scenario characterized by elevated unemployment and a deficiency of competent and motivated personnel. Employee-intensive organizations, such as banks and educational institutions, have a significant demand for skilled and engaged employees.

Employee engagement is a topic of great interest in research and practice due to its significant impact on organizational performance. It has been recognized as a crucial factor influencing employee behavior, performance, and turnover intention. Studies indicate that employee engagement can lead to a competitive advantage and greater financial returns for

organizations (Christian et al., 2011; Albrecht et al., 2015). However, researchers have differing views regarding the explanation of work engagement. It is also defined as the willingness to achieve work roles and organizational objectives successfully (Soane et al., 2012). Engagement has become a focal point in today's business landscape and is acknowledged as a critical driver of organizational success and efficiency.

In a recent study by Akhtar et al. (2023), findings indicate that higher education institutions are encountering issues related to organizational justice, resulting in adverse emotions and increased turnover intention among employees. The research also suggests that a lack of organizational justice may decrease employee engagement (Akhtar et al., 2023). Additionally, Shabeer et al. (2023) have examined organizational career adaptability and the moderating impact of organizational justice, particularly in higher education institutes with inadequate leadership to ensure organizational justice. These studies emphasize the need to investigate further the relationships between appreciative leadership, job crafting, workplace association, and justice in organizations, particularly regarding employee equality within higher education institutes. Thus, the current study research problem needs to address the gap in existing literature and provide empirical evidence regarding the relationship between exogenous and endogenous constructs in the following domain of higher education. For this reason, the study's findings underscore the significance of addressing organizational justice to mitigate negative employee behavior and its undesirable consequences.

Employee or organizational member attachment to their work role is called engagement. Positive performance-related outcomes are achieved due to employees' effective cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in work roles and towards their work and organizations (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2018). Various individual and organizational factors have been identified in research as influencing employee engagement levels. Researchers have specifically examined human resources management practices and their impact on shaping employee attitudes, personality development, and individual characteristics to enhance engagement (Byrne et al., 2017; Shantz et al., 2016).

Prior research has explored the significant factors affecting employee engagement, particularly regarding job resources. These resources encompass physical, social, organizational, and psychological aspects that contribute to attaining work-related objectives, mitigating job demands, and promoting personal growth. Researchers have identified vital job resources that influence employee engagement, such as employee autonomy, feedback mechanisms, opportunities for development, rewards and recognition, supervisory support, job variety, and alignment of work roles, all of which serve as crucial predictors of employee engagement (Crawford et al., 2010). Job-level resources were found to be directly influential in employee engagement. Personal resources are also considered predictors of employee engagement, and it has been expressed that self-efficacy, optimism, and other individual factors influence employee engagement. Further, the motivational aspect also plays a vital role in defining employee engagement (Bauer et al., 2014).

Organizational justice is a critical element of the workplace environment and involves the equitable distribution of resources, fair access to advancement opportunities, impartial allocation of rewards and benefits, and unbiased decision-making procedures. It revolves around creating a fair workplace and encompasses employees' perceptions of receiving fair and equitable treatment (Lambert et al., 2020). Previously, organizational justice has been expressed as employees' perception of fair treatment and related attitudes while ensuring compensation justice. Organizational injustice provokes negative emotions among employees,

causing them to become unhappy and dissatisfied, lack engagement, increase turnover intention, poor performance, and counterproductive behavior due to the absence of justice and fairness. The impact may occur due to a lack of adequate compensation, an unpleasant working environment, and unequal treatment of opportunities for employees (Jufrizen & Kandhita, 2021).

Job crafting is a critical component of the work environment, with organizations focusing on addressing job-related issues. Job crafting refers to the extent of changes made to an individual's job (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Job crafting is a method that organizations use to help their employees enhance and sustain motivation and energy in the workplace. It involves organizations revamping job roles and processes, incorporating job enrichment and job enlargement. Rather than being a management-led initiative focused on altering job design and employee-related issues, job crafting is seen as proactive behavior by employees. It involves empowering employees to reshape and redesign their roles as needed, thereby influencing the working environment. Factors such as job autonomy, servant leadership, and transformational leadership also significantly shape performance outcomes (Kim et al., 2018; Meijerink et al., 2020). With effective empowerment and autonomy, employees can align their roles and work processes with their methods while championing initiatives that uphold organizational goals and drive the achievement of work-related objectives (Harju et al., 2018).

The existing study examines the significant impact of appreciation leadership, which comprises critical acknowledgment, recognition, and appreciation components. It may critically assess and emphasize the motivational importance of employees feeling valued, mutual respect, gratitude, and effective interpersonal communication as crucial factors for positive performance outcomes.

Hence, the primary aim of the current study is to investigate employee engagement among teachers in higher educational institutes in Punjab, Pakistan, focusing on the influence of organizational justice, workplace belonging, and job crafting. Additionally, the research examines the role of appreciative leadership in employee engagement and its moderation effects. The study will assess employee engagement levels and propose practical strategies for organizational justice, job crafting, and initiatives to foster workplace belonging, aiming to optimize performance. The research underscores the importance of appropriate leadership approaches in educational institutes to engage employees and effectively achieve organizational objectives and missions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organizational Justice and Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement is a topic of debate among research scholars. It can be defined as employees' positive state of mind, characterized by dedication, absorption, and vigor towards their work. Alternatively, it can also be seen as employees' willingness to contribute actively to achieving organizational objectives and goals.

Previously, numerous research efforts have been dedicated to exploring employee engagement, focusing on the empirical examination of various interrelated variables (Alam et al., 2022). These efforts have delved into the connection between organizational and job resources, encompassing job autonomy, job variety, developmental opportunities, and supervisor support. An integral part of this research has been the consideration of the organizational engagement climate, which collectively influences employee engagement.

Findings from these studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between organizational resources and the organizational engagement climate and a positive relationship with employee engagement. Additionally, it has been revealed that the organizational engagement climate positively associates with job resources and ultimately impacts employee engagement (Albrecht et al., 2015). Another study explored the antecedents of engaging employees, including the role of general management, the performance of managerial employees, reward management, and transformational leadership. The study reported that reward, performance, general management and leadership were the most striking factors in predicting employee engagement (Alam et al., 2022).

The underpinning theories selected for the current study comprised “Social Exchange Theory” (Hutchings et al., 2024) and Positive Organizational Psychology” (Parks, 2024). George Homans is credited with developing the Social Exchange Theory (SET) during the 1950s and 1960s. The theory evaluates the costs and benefits of social interactions and relationships. **Positive Organizational Psychology (POP)** is a more recent field drawing from diverse theoretical perspectives, with prominent contributors such as Fred Luthans, Martin Seligman, and Barbara Fredrickson. Luthans advocated for examining positive organizational aspects, Seligman focused on the relationship between positive psychology and POP, and Fredrickson's work delved into the effects of positive emotions on well-being.

Organizational justice is a critical factor that should be considered in both financial and non-financial contexts. It includes fair resource allocation, equitable rewards management, justice-based incentives, and the implementation of fair pay and salary structures. Additionally, it involves providing equal opportunities for promotion based on performance. The perception of organizational justice significantly influences employees' attitudes and behaviors. Fair treatment in the workplace fosters higher levels of trust, self-esteem, career satisfaction, and adaptability while also addressing coworker issues and problems (AL-Abrow et al., 2013).

Previously, researchers focused on supervisors among employees to assess the career adaptability influenced by organization-based self-esteem and inclusive leadership. The moderation role of organizational justice was evident significantly in the relationship between self-esteem and career adaptivity, which depicts the importance of organizational justice (Shabeer et al., 2023). Another research effort has been made to assess the role of organizational justice in ensuring job satisfaction for the purpose of employee retention; the education sector faces higher turnover intention due to lower satisfaction, so it has been argued that lack of organizational justice, job stress, coworker competencies and coworkers' warmth (Riaz et al., 2023). The researchers have addressed the issue of higher turnover intention due to a lack of organizational justice; educational institutes are required to ensure fair treatment among employees to develop a positive perception of organizational justice that reduces negative emotions (Akhtar et al., 2023).

Based on the above literature review, the researcher argues that organizational justice tends to affect employee engagement significantly among the employees, so there for the following hypothesis is derived:

H1: Organizational Justice reduces employee engagement among academic employees

2.2 Job Crafting and Employee Engagement

The study emphasizes the significant impact of job crafting on employee engagement, as job design directly influences employee behavior. Managers and employees play a critical role in shaping jobs to meet organizational objectives, leveraging their specific knowledge, skills,

abilities, and motivational perspectives. Job crafting involves proactive employee behavior to align individual characteristics with job requirements. While designing customized jobs for each individual is challenging, job crafting offers a fresh perspective on job redesign. It enables organizations to tailor jobs to fit employees' characteristics without fundamentally altering the core job structure (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Job crafting is associated with the general behavior of employees; it is accurately described as a process that initiates and creates change over time, which entails the sequence of events without creating any hassle and losing the connection among participants. The changes may occur cognitively or physically; both are related to the job and work relationship that shows how an individual views the job. In a nutshell, job crafting is the job-related changes initiated by a particular employee while remaining within the task's limit, scope, and boundary. Cognitive crafting addresses how a person views the task and changes the approach to performing the job, for example, the purpose of work to align with passion (Batova, 2018).

Job crafting enables individuals to address the meaningfulness of the job. It assists in achieving meaning and satisfaction for an individual that relates to the change in the identity of work, self-image and the job's meaningfulness (Mattarelli & Tagliaventi, 2015). The research scholars have embarked on several forms of job crafting; it has been added that avoidance crafting activities simplify the procedures, eliminate the obstacles, and make work much easier (Costantini et al., 2021). The purpose of job crafting is not to withdraw from the hindrance of the job but to focus on improving the job and working conditions or tasks allocated. In contrast, it decreased the hindrance and optimized the job demand and work engagement (Tian et al., 2021). Job crafting is also referred to as strength and interest in the job; it has been argued that it enhances the fit between personal resources and the job itself. However, no direct relationship is reported between job crafting and an increase in positive behavior, but it increases the strength and person-job fit among the employees (Kooij et al., 2017).

Previously, research studies have explained that job-crafting behavior is influenced by attitudes, descriptive norms, injunctive norms, interventions, weekly intentions, and behavioral changes. The study revealed that job crafting provides several benefits, including self-regulatory strategies and goal setting (Costantini et al., 2022). The study's findings revealed that job crafting is positively associated with job complexity and workload, which is further negatively related to burnout, and a positive relationship has been reported between job complexity and burnout (Harju et al., 2021). The phenomenon of engagement has been investigated previously, and task crafting, cognitive crafting, and relational crafting influence the work, meaning that it further increases the engagement level of the employees (Letona-Ibañez et al., 2021). Another study expressed the role task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting in the person-job fit that further achieves job satisfaction. The study revealed that task, relationship and cognitive crafting influence the person-job fit phenomenon, significantly influencing job satisfaction (Li et al., 2021).

Prior literature has investigated the phenomenon of job crafting on various behavioral outcomes but overlooked the empirical investigation of the relationship between job crafting and employee engagement. Thus, there is an urgent need to address changing job duties in developing employee engagement. The following argument is formed:

H2: Job crafting influences employee engagement among academic employees

2.3 Workplace Belongingness and Employee Engagement

Social relationships, affiliations, and belongingness are human needs that require an individual to be accepted in the workplace. An individual may feel avoided or rejected if socially accepted among a group of people, so there is a strong need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The employees exert their efforts to retain social relations and engage in prosocial activities and behavior if they are not treated well. The need to belong is not satisfied. If the individual has a lack of recognition and doesn't have ample relationships at the workplace with colleagues, this situation may drag employees into silence and negative emotions, so therefore, employees strive for establishing and retaining healthy relationships with coworkers to avoid negative emotions and behaviors. It has been claimed that lack of association at the workplace leads to negative outcomes, and higher social relationships enable employees to avoid ostracism and indulging in devastating emotions and behaviors at the workplace (Eck et al., 2017; Fatima et al., 2020).

Previously, research studies have been conducted on belongingness at the workplace and the feeling of security; organizations are striving to establish and promote inclusive programs to enhance workplace belongingness. The literature has embarked on workplace belongingness, which states that job satisfaction is influenced by autonomy at work, support of organizations, and cooperation of colleagues and coworkers (Mark & Smith, 2012). It has been stated that effective. Healthy social associations feed an employee's psychological needs and lead to their well-being. The prior research efforts have reported a significant positive relationship between workplace belongingness and satisfaction (Spehar et al., 2016). The literature also depicted that belongingness is significantly related to the coworker's support and job satisfaction; the sense of belongingness plays a significant role in establishing social support and gaining satisfaction. Furthermore, the positive significant affiliation of an individual at the workplace brings positive emotions and promotes social relations to control the negative and devastating emotions that hinder performance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Job satisfaction was significantly influenced by work passion, psychological empowerment and belongingness. The study reported that belongingness is significant to job satisfaction among the employees of SMEs in India (Pathak & Srivastava, 2020). Another study reported that workplace belongingness is mediating between diversity climate and tacit knowledge sharing, as the study was conducted on various employees in Nigeria (Enwereuzor, 2021). The exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation were found to be influenced by workplace belongingness.

The study revealed that workplace belongingness impacts exploitative and exploratory innovation in Turkey's IT industry (Ozsungur, 2020). The study by Javed & Ishak, (2019) reported that workplace belongingness has been reported as a significant predictor of employee behavior and assists in reducing the potential negative impact. This study claims that inclined association at the workplace impacts performance. The higher the impact of workplace belongingness, the higher engagement and positive behavior depiction. The researchers examined the employees of pharmaceutical firms located in European countries. The study revealed that inclusive leadership also influences change participation through workplace belongingness.

The study suggests that organizations must ensure effective leadership to initiate the change, and higher workplace belongingness enables the employees to embrace the effective

and beneficial changes that must be established (Katsaros, 2022). Another study revealed that higher workplace belongingness is associated with lower emotional exhaustion, and firms must devise strategies that promote workplace belongingness that assist in reducing and preventing negative emotions such as burnout (Pasman et al., 2022).

There is a scarcity of empirical evidence that previous research has shortcomings in the empirical investigation of workplace belongingness that impacts behavioral outcomes. This study argues that workplace belongingness tends to increase employee engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is derived:

H3: Workplace belongingness impacts employee engagement among academic employees

2.4 Moderating role of Appreciative Leadership

This study aims to examine the leadership factors that contribute to employee engagement. Effective leadership is widely held to be crucial for achieving organizational goals and implementing control mechanisms that drive positive organizational outcomes. The study suggests that appreciative leadership can influence the connection between organizational justice, job crafting, workplace belongingness, and employee engagement.

The academic staff in higher education plays a crucial role in developing human capital by enriching knowledge, promoting innovation, and meeting the demand for educated youth in various sectors. In a highly competitive environment, the higher education sector faces numerous challenges in meeting the need for a skilled workforce that can contribute to professional and economic growth. The quality of education depends on the academic staff's expertise, knowledge, skills, and abilities, which enhance the workforce and meet the demand for human capital nationwide (Taamneh et al., 2022; Elrehail et al., 2018). The leadership of any institute plays a significant role in accomplishing the objectives by ensuring the optimal utilization of resources that enhances the developmental perspective that contributes to the achievement of the organizational mission. The researchers have documented the phenomenon of leadership well for its significance in influencing the organizational culture and innovativeness of its values and ideas (Naqshbandi & Tabche, 2018). The literature expresses the different leadership styles, including transformational leadership and transactional leadership style, that were found to be the most striking approaches in influencing the activities at the workplace, including behavioral outcomes of the employees (Javed et al., 2018 Jia et al., 2018).

Prior literature has incorporated the different leadership approaches toward performance-related outcomes; the study conducted on the higher education sector of Pakistan showed that authentic leadership influences innovative behavior through the mediating role of affective commitment (Javed et al., 2021). The employees' innovative behavior was assessed in the study. The humble leadership approach with the mediating role of core self-evaluation and the moderating role of leader political skills among the employees of the technology sector of China influenced it. The study revealed that humble leadership positively influences the employee's positive behavior towards innovative initiatives (Zhou & Wu, 2018).

This study intends to incorporate appreciative leadership due to a lack of research on this phenomenon. There is a lack of research on appreciative leadership in determining employee engagement; this study contributes to knowledge by expressing the relationship between appreciative leadership and employee engagement. Further, the study intends to determine the moderation effect of appreciative leadership. Appreciative leadership

consists of three distinct elements: appreciation, recognition, and acknowledgment (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Appreciative leadership refers to enhancing the essential need of employees to recognize that they belong; the employees are required to be respected for the tasks they perform, to understand the direction of the firm, the importance of success, and the intention toward the general welfare (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2012). The study's findings revealed that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between empowering leadership, job crafting, work alienation and affective commitment (Dash & Vohra, 2019).

This study developed the following direct and moderation hypotheses:

H4: Organizational Justice influences the employee engagement among the academic employees

H5: Job crafting influences the relationship between organizational justice and employee engagement among academic employees

H5: Workplace belongingness influences the relationship between job crafting and employee engagement among academic employees

H5: Appreciative Leadership moderates the relationship among organizational justice, Job crafting, workplace belongingness and employee engagement among academic employees

2.5 Research Framework

Figure 1 below presents the research framework of the present study and shows the hypothesized relationship among different constructs.

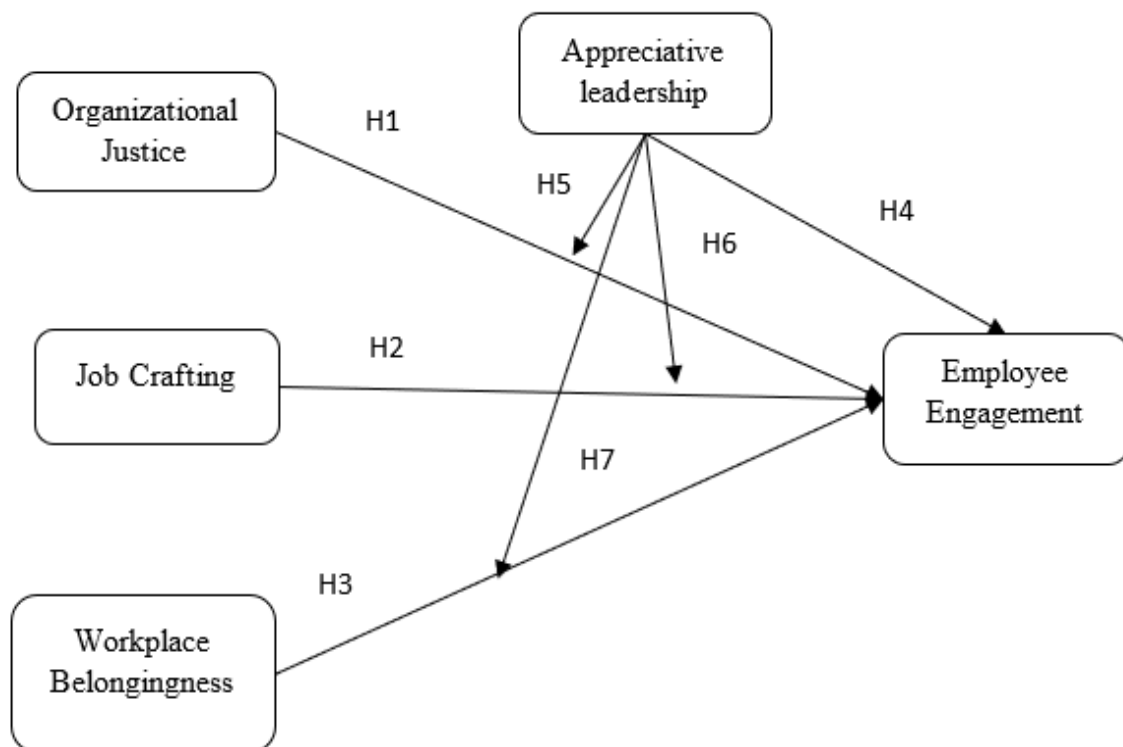


Figure 1: Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is quantitative in nature as data was collected from academic employees in Punjab, Pakistan, to assess the level of employee engagement influenced by the different constructs as depicted in Figure 1 research framework. The data was collected through a questionnaire adopted from the previous literature. The sample was drawn from the universities of Punjab and the capital territory of Pakistan, Islamabad.

The researcher collected the data from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, Punjab University of Lahore, Government College University Lahore, University of Engineering and Technology Lahore, Government College University Faisalabad, Agriculture University of Faisalabad, Government College University Lahore, Bahaudin University Multan, and The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. According to the HEC website, in 2023, there be approximately 4,864 academic employees; the sample size for such a population must be 360 or higher. A simple random sampling technique was adopted for the analysis of collected data. The research developed the questionnaire from adopted measurement scales of the constructs used for the analysis.

4. MEASUREMENT SCALE

The study adopted the measurement scales of the construct from previous research efforts of different scholars. Each item was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, whereas 1 is considered to highly disagree, 2 is considered to agree, 3 is considered neutral, 4 is considered to be agreed, and 5 is considered to be strongly agreed. The nine-item scale of employee engagement was adopted from the study of Albrecht et al., (2018). The six-item scale of organizational justice was taken from the research article Riaz et al., (2023). The fifteen-item scale of job crafting was taken from the research study of Zhang and Liu, (2021). The 12-items scale of workplace belongingness was developed by Jena and Pradhan, (2018) and later utilized in the study of Javed and Ishak, (2019) in education sector was adopted. The 3 items measurement scale of appreciative leadership was adopted from the research study of Stocker et al., (2010). The research employed the Smart-PLS 4 to analyze collected data in the analysis section.

The researcher sent the questionnaire using google forms and sent it to academic employees. To receive an appropriate response, the researcher floated a 50% extra questionnaire, as suggested by the (Salkind, 1997). The researcher distributed 546 questionnaires and received 281 responses, but 31 were incomplete and not useable. Hence, the researcher selected 250 responses, which is 45% of the total distributed questionnaires and 68% of the total population. That is considered a good response size according to the rule of thumb. The researcher utilized Smart-PLS 4 for collected data analysis. The measurement model assessment determines the reliability and validity of the constructs. The second phase consists of assessing the hypothesized relationship between constructs, known as structural equation modeling.

4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

This phase includes the analysis stage, which assesses the validity and reliability of potential variables. The PLS algorithm method was utilized for analysis. Cronbach alpha and composite reliability show construct reliability, and the average variance extracted (AVE) presents the construct's validity in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement Items Loadings

Constructs	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
EE	0.862	0.892	0.501
OJ	0.931	0.942	0.747
JC	0.943	0.947	0.557
WPB	0.932	0.942	0.571
ALS	0.814	0.840	0.727

Note: Employee Engagement (EE), Organizational Justice (OJ), Job Crafting (JC), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Appreciative Leadership (ALS)

Table 1 shows the values for Alpha, CR and AVE. The cutoff point for Cronbach alpha, CR, must be higher than 0.70, and AVE is recommended to be higher than 0.50 for the acceptability (Hair Jr et al., 2014). The value of AVE must be higher than 0.50 for acceptable validity, which is extracted from the factor loading. The values in Table 1 meet the requirements of construct reliability and validity, so the constructs are reliable and valid for further analysis. Figure 2 below shows the measurement model extracted from Smart-PLS4.

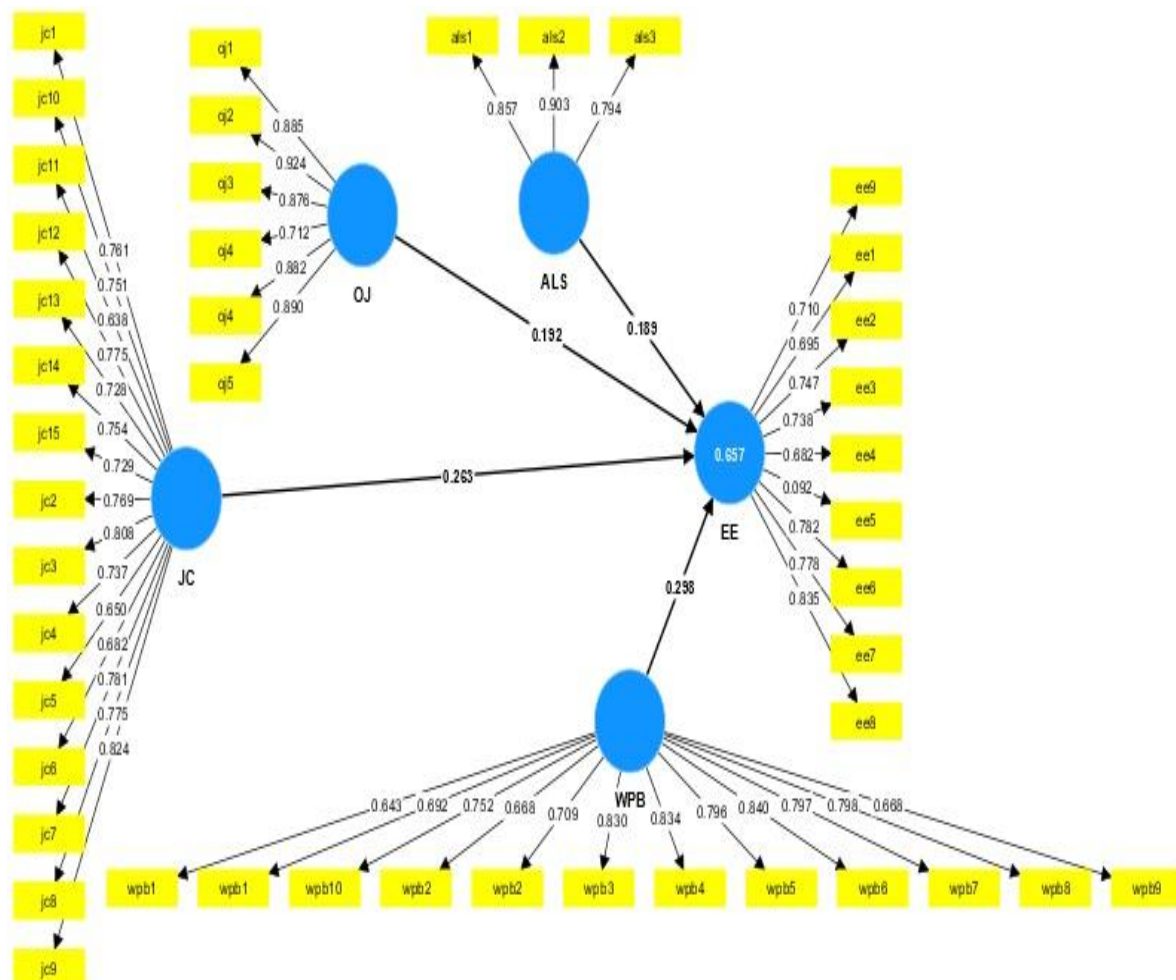


Figure 2: Measurement Model Assessment: Note: Employee Engagement (EE), Organizational Justice (OJ), Job Crafting (JC), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Appreciative Leadership (ALS)

The discriminant validity is determined in PLS, which is derived from the square root of AVE; the intersectional value presents the correlational value according to Table 2 below.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	EE	OJ	JC	WPB	ALS
EE	0.705				
OJ	0.611	0.864			
JC	0.696	0.660	0.746		
WPB	0.701	0.513	0.601	0.755	
ALS	0.574	0.413	0.631	0.666	0.852

Note: Employee Engagement (EE), Organizational Justice (OJ), Job Crafting (JC), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Appreciative Leadership (ALS)

The above table shows that construct achieve the discriminant validity, as the intersectional values are higher than the other correlational values according to the suggested criteria of Fornell and Larcker, (1981).

4.2 Structural Model Assessment

This phase executed the relationship testing between framework variables by employing a pls-algorithm. Figure 1 to determine the employee engagement. Four direct hypotheses and three indirect mediating hypothesized relationships are to be tested. The bootstrapping method is utilized of Smart-PLS to assess the relationship based on the β value, t-statistics and -p-value. The β value shows the direction and strength of the relationship, t-statistics must remain higher than 1.96 for acceptable significance, and the p-value should be lower than 0.05 as the confidence interval in social sciences is 95% for acceptability (Hair et al., 2012). Table 3 below presents the direct relationships, and Table 4 shows the results of moderating hypotheses.

Table 3: Direct Relationships

Hypotheses	B value	T-Statistics	P-Value
OJ→EE	0.254	2.000	0.046
JC→EE	0.269	2.886	0.004
WPB→EE	0.306	3.233	0.001
ALS→EE	0.091	0.786	0.442

Note: Employee Engagement (EE), Organizational Justice (OJ), Job Crafting (JC), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Appreciative Leadership (ALS)

This study selected a moderation model to investigate how the study itself (the moderator) impacts the relationship between two other variables (Abbas et al., 2021). The Hayes PROCESS macro, compatible with SPSS and AMOS, was utilized to test moderation effects and present the results visually. The above table shows the assessment of hypothesized results; hypothesis H1 investigates the relationship between organizational justice and employee engagement; the results show that there is a significant relationship between these variables; therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted on statistical grounds. The results of the current study show that organizational justice tends to impact the behavior of employees, which means organizational justice should be ensured at the workplace to gain employee engagement. The results were found to be aligned with performance Albrecht et al., (2018).

Hypothesis H2 investigated the relationship between job crafting and employee engagement; based on the results, hypothesis H2 was found to be statistically significant, meaning job crafting influences employee engagement due to an established sense of

recognition and empowerment. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is statistically significant. The result of the current study is in line with the previous research finding of Zhang & Liu, (2021), that job crafting influences performance. The results of current study also justifies the findings of Letona-Ibañez et al., (2021).

Hypothesis H3 assessed the relationship between workplace belongingness and employee engagement; the result in Table 3 depicted that the hypothesized relationship is statistically significant based on the suggested criteria. The study suggested ensuring workplace belongingness by devising strategies for engaging the employees. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is statistically accepted. The result of the current study is in line and satisfies the findings of the prior study of (Javed & Ishak, 2019) which reported that workplace belongingness reduces the negative behavior of employees. Similarly, the study of Pathak & Srivastava, (2020) reported that workplace belongingness increases the satisfaction.

The hypothesis H4 tested the relationship between appreciative leadership and employee engagement, the study argued that appropriate leadership influences the behavior of employees, but the results in table 2 depicted statistically insignificant relationship between variables. That means hypothesis H4 is rejected on statistical grounds. The result of the current study found to be contradictory to previous findings of the (Bashaireh & David, 2019), further it contradict the findings of (Zhou & Wu, 2018), that shows appropriate leadership influence the employees behavior.

4.3 Moderating Testing

This section entails the SEM results of the moderating effect of appreciative leadership between the exogenous and endogenous constructs. Table 4 below shows the moderating effect.

Hypotheses	β value	T-Statistics	P-Value
OJ*ALS \rightarrow EE	0.051	0.415	0.678
JC*ALS \rightarrow EE	0.241	2.116	0.034
WPB*ALS \rightarrow EE	0.179	1.971	0.046

Note: Employee Engagement (EE), Organizational Justice (OJ), Job Crafting (JC), Workplace Belongingness (WPB), Appreciative Leadership (ALS)

Hypothesis H5 assessed the moderation effect of appreciative leadership on organizational justice and employee engagement. The results revealed that there is no moderation effect of appreciative leadership on organizational justice and employee engagement. That means the presence of organizational justice is preferred even in the case of inappropriate leadership.

Therefore, hypothesis H5 is rejected on statistical grounds. Hypothesis H6 investigated the moderation role of appreciative leadership between the relationship of job crafting and employee engagement; the results depicted that there is a significant moderation effect of appreciative leadership between job crafting and employee engagement, which clearly means that appropriate leadership enables the employees to empower the employees and recognize their efforts that encourage the employees to get engage with workplace.

So therefore, it is highly recommended that educational institutes ensure the appropriate leadership that encourages and supports the employees in order to achieve the required objectives.

Hypothesis H7 assessed the moderation effect of appreciative leadership between workplace belongingness and employee engagement. The results showed that there is no moderation effect between workplace belongingness and employee engagement. However, the direct relationship between workplace belongingness and employee engagement is significant, but no moderation effect has been reported.

Therefore, hypothesis H7 is rejected on statistical grounds. That clearly means that effective and higher workplace belongingness impacts employee engagement as employees remain in their organizations even in the absence of effective leadership. The study suggested to ensure the programs and policies to be devised for creating the workplace belongingness among employees to accomplish the organizational objectives.

4.4 Practical Implications

Based on the theoretical aspects our study identified the protective approach like appreciative leadership that shown that in order to address engagement, it is essential to dynamically combine different HR approaches. More to the point, we demonstrate the necessity of context-specific HRM and a flexible leadership style especially in the educational context located in Asian region that transcends the conventional view of HR procedures.

The results of this study have practical consequences for educational leaders and managers. As it promised to offer relevant and meaningful guidelines for managers and educational institutions. Initially, those who work in the education sector need to be creative because they need to stay current with new developments in their field.

In this regard, this research may aid administrators at Pakistani institutions and the government in formulating more suitable and effective HR and management approaches to enhance employee engagement among academics. Further, educational leaders should establish a system that enables their adherents to manage their responsibilities and enhance their knowledge. Second, if the lecturers and support personnel are experiencing any difficulties on the job, they should communicate their concerns to the leaders of the organisation.

These are the ways in which leaders would seek to ensure the wellness and happiness of their workforce. The third step is for the educational institution to properly organise the professional development training for the leaders, managers, and support personnel. This training will bring about an increase in the level of creativity that is shown by these individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

The study focused on employee engagement in public sector universities, particularly among academic employees. It identified several key factors impacting engagement, including organizational justice, job crafting, workplace belongingness, and appreciative leadership. The research found that organizational justice, which ensures fairness in workplace policies and decisions, plays a significant role in engaging employees.

Job crafting and workplace belongingness were also found to influence employee engagement. However, the study did not find appreciative leadership to have a significant impact on employee engagement, although it did report a moderating influence of appreciative leadership between job crafting and employee engagement. The study recommended that firms develop policies focused on organizational justice, job crafting, workplace belongingness, and effective leadership to enhance employee engagement in the higher education sector.

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