

Assessing Employee Loyalty through Organizational Attributes in Telecom Sector: An Empirical Evidence

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ABSTRACT

Employee loyalty is a value addition concept in the overall organizational success. The main purpose of this research study is to identify the impact of core attributes of organizations on employee loyalty and their predictability power for the concept particularly in telecommunication sector in Pakistan. This is a correlational study conducted to investigate the relationships. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire validated under a pilot study. Initially 250 questionnaires were distributed among employees and valid responses of 190 questionnaires were analysed. Found that job involvement, perceived organizational support, employee engagement and distributive justice have positively significant impact on employee loyalty. Due consideration is required for the factors like distributive justice and perceived organizational support to focus on more amicable work environment and promote the supportive mechanisms for employees to work and excel. The main predictors of employee loyalty connote a healthy working environment reflecting the organizational efforts for creating a social impact. Employees would gain special attention in terms of the factors being addressed in this study. The research focuses on the growing importance and demand for crystallizing the concept of employee loyalty.

Keywords: Employee Loyalty, Distributive Justice, Organizational support, Performance, Satisfaction, Employee Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

In this globalized era, organizations are under increasing pressure to improve performance and maximize the contribution of every employee and loyal employees are a source of gaining competitive advantage. Employee loyalty has become an attractive business proposition (Saks, 2006). It has been observed that employee loyalty is an immense concept important for the organizations and the factors influencing employee perceptions to be either fully engaged or disengaged. No detailed literature existed on this notion and on how the employees perceive their involvement activities in their organizations. Motivated employees tend to contribute more in terms of organizational productivity and support in maintaining a high commitment level leading to higher customer satisfaction (Kahn, 1990). The present study investigates the impact of major factors which are job involvement, employee engagement, perceived organizational support and distributive justice on employee loyalty. This research study finds out the relationship of these variables on loyalty of employees in the telecom sector.

For the last few decades, there is a growing demand for an emotional construct of employee loyalty in the business firms. In this modern era, every enterprise wants to remain competitive in competition. Almost every business company is facing new challenges with the rising trends of globalization. A company can achieve remarkable success if it has some competent human resource (Judge & Bono, 2001).

If employees are fully loyal in performing their business operations then the company can achieve its major goal of profit maximization. Employee loyalty is a value addition concept for organizations and an indicator through which the outcomes such as employee productivity, organizational outcomes and performance of the business firms could be measured. The main concern of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of loyal employees towards their jobs and organizations. Now employee loyalty has gone beyond than being a hypothetical construct (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014).

Employee loyalty creates value and morale to achieve the organizational objectives starting in 1920. During World War II, the U.S. researchers developed a mature concept of the value of morale in order to predict the unity of strength and attitudinal battle readiness before war. In post war mass production society, morale scores were used as predictors of quality, speed and militancy because this society required unity of power and strength in implementation or execution. With the introduction of knowledge workers and emphasis on the importance of individual talent management, a term was required to define an individual's emotional attachment and affiliation to the organization, fellow associates and the job. Thus the birth of the term "Employee Loyalty and Engagement" shows an individual emotional phenomenon whereas morale is a group phenomenon of similar features (Baumruk, 2004).

Employee loyalty is in fact the intellectual commitment and affiliation for the organization. People are emotionally and physically attached to the job. Theories provide strong basis for why employees are engaged in work. Three psychological theories were floated showing a positive link between engagement and self-evaluation i.e. availability, meaningfulness and safety. Employee loyalty is a popular term being focused in organizations. Employee loyalty confirms that employees are emotionally attached physically, mentally and emotionally towards achieving organizational goals. Loyalty tends to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness which means an employee is fully engaged in his job (Richman, 2006).

Background of the Study

Managers of business firms obviously realized that 21st century demands more productivity and efficiency as compared to the past. The private sector in Pakistan is struggling to uplift the performance. Supervisors have been dealing with many challenges for the prosperity ahead of competitors. Many consultants have been contributing their share to help the managers of business firms. Two concepts of employee commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour showed the productive efficiency in 21st century, managers focused on their operational improvements (Lockwood, 2007). The managers started thinking how they can keep employees engaged at their jobs. The results of improvement initiatives taken by the managers cannot be productive without the wilful engagement of employees. Internal loyalty is the emotional dimension while external dimensions cover how loyalty is manifested through behaviours. Employee performance is enhanced through loyalty as they get committed for organizational success and feel their organization a best choice for them. In most developed countries, service sector is fastest growing sector and it has the largest share in total yield and employment (Spector, 1987).

Service sector is significantly important in terms of foreign direct investment and export opportunities for suppliers in cross-border trade. The service sector is growing due to development in knowledge and skill contribution. The contribution of service sector is increasing over the years in Pakistan. The growth rate in service sector is higher than in agricultural and industrial sector. Pakistan is originally an agrarian economy but due to the advancements in service and technology, the economy is switching towards service sector. Growth in this sector is tremendous. Employment portion in service sector is increasing and people are shifting towards it for better opportunities (Coffman, 2000).

In Pakistan, this sector has four important break-ups i.e. distributive, producer, personal and social services. Different sub-sectors are a part of these individual sectors. For the last few years, there are note-worthy changes in constructing Pakistani economy. Banking sector is a part of producer sector. This sector contributes to the major portion in financial activities. A service sector is largest contributor in GDP. For last 10 years, managers in private firms are more employee-focused as they care for the factors affecting employee loyalty (Bakker, 2011). Employees help organization to achieve its goals and become competing. The managers must concentrate on improvement of major factors that can make employees more affiliated with the organizations. In U.S, Europe and America, many researchers conducted the researches on this notion. However, there is a lack of consensus on findings in Eastern countries like Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

The study intends to empirically investigate the impact of major organizational measures like employee engagement, job involvement, perceived organizational support and distributive justice on employee loyalty.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the effects of organizational attributes on employee loyalty in telecom sector. Employees are the most critical asset for an organization. This research gives suggestions about the effective strategies to be adopted by managers to improve the important variables in order to engage the employees with organizations. Telecom sector is selected for investigating the extent of loyalty of employees. This study provides insights to bridge the research calls by previous studies. There are less empirical evidences on the influence of factors such as employee engagement, job involvement, perceived organizational support and distributive justice on employee loyalty (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The present study aims to explain the impact of key dimensions. More precisely, the aim of this research study is to observe which determinants of employee loyalty function sound and well.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of job involvement, employee engagement, perceived organizational support and distributive justice on employee loyalty in telecom sector.
- To suggest some remedial measures in the light of observed phenomenon.

Significance of the Study

Loyal and committed employees are more productive therefore the employee loyalty in context of service sector requires to be examined. This paper attempts to figure out the clarity of this construct as the previous studies lack unanimous findings. There is less rigorous academic research on topic of employee loyalty. This gap has provided opportunity to develop an integrated model to analyse the drivers of employee loyalty (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). The key factors have been empirically analysed as previously the empirical effects have not been studied in a way to lead the business sector. The outcomes of this study draw attention

towards the service sector where employee loyalty has been observed very less. It gives short and wide picture of employee loyalty to understand the holistic phenomenon. When employees are satisfied psychologically, they contribute well.

Research Questions

The study asks for following questions:

1. To what extent the telecom companies enhance loyalty through job involvement.
2. To what extent the telecom companies create the sense of loyalty through perceived organizational support.
3. To what extent the telecom companies enhance loyalty through distributive justice.

Contribution to next research level

This research contributes in empirical literature of core determinants of employee loyalty in case of telecom sector. Employee loyalty is affected by numerous factors which could be brought under consideration. The business enterprises face challenges to find and retain the best employees. The findings directly integrate employee loyalty and guide the telecom companies for keeping their employees committed and loyal. This study describes a phenomenon to see the productivity and motivation of loyal employees and know the reasons of performance lapses. The two major contributors are employee engagement and perceived organizational support change the thinking and working styles. The factor of organizational work environment consists of systems and processes in which employees feel no distraction. It is can be studied further.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kahn (1990) first explained the framework of engagement has become an emotional and psychological construct in previous literature. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) proved that job-demand-resource model helps in understanding the causes of employee engagement. The service environment is positively linked with employee engagement.

Judge and Bono (2001) found that core self-evaluation is the bottom-line evaluation that individuals hold. The employees with positive self-evaluation might evaluate them as worthy and capable. Self-esteem is a fundamental appraisal made by an individual. Self-efficacy is the second trait of self-evaluation as the employee's ability to perform in various situations.

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) noted that six areas of work processes influenced the employee loyalty i.e. social support, work load, recognition, perceived fairness and loyalty is expected to facilitate the link among these six factors. Loyalty is an emotional term involving emotional feelings.

Rafferty, Maben, West and Robinson (2005) explained the concept originates from two theories and has been the theme of commitment and organization citizenship behaviour. Mutual coordination among managers and employees affect the quality of connection and reporting relationships. It was recommended that employee engagement is the association with enthusiasm for work processes in an organization. Saks (2006) introduced employee engagement and explicitly explained employee engagement as a unique concept in business firms and employee engagement consists of emotional and cognitive components related to work performance.

Lockwood (2007) investigated that reliable communication is considered as an effective management tool for employee loyalty. The organizations could keep the workforce attentive and active through encouraging the considerate communication strategies.

Macey and Schneider (2008) conceptualized employee loyalty as a desired condition securing a managerial purpose. It has both behavioural and attitudinal components as it indicates enthusiasm, effort, commitment and involvement. The concept of employee loyalty was found to be a difficult system of behavioural and state constructs and organizational settings facilitate the employees to engage in their work. The trust (trust in top-level administration, trust in co-workers and trust in supervisor) has a dynamic role and significantly affects the advancement of employee work engagement. It was suggested that the connection between trust and work engagement is equally reinforcing and indicate an upward spiral.

Frese (2008) explained that loyalty multiplies in conditions when one is happy and satisfied with their job especially in situations where deadlines are given to employees to work. Distributive justice is the reaction of individuals and fairness of organization.

Markos and Sridevi (2010) identified employee loyalty is related with almost all features of HR practices. Employee engagement is the two-fold concept between boss and employee to two concepts which are employee commitment and job satisfaction. Loyal and engaged employees are psychologically and emotionally involved for work. Bindl and Parker (2010) discovered that internal communication influence employee loyalty. It considers organizational practices that efficiently transfer the values of company to whole staff and make them involved in organizational aims. Shuck and Wollard (2010) examined that emotional part of employee loyalty is attached to the feelings and job involvement.

Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2010) investigated that employee loyalty is not a one-time activity but it is a constant process of knowledge, improvement, action and development of employees. Employee engagement gives the priority to institutionalized communication. In the 21st century, employee's emotional link to work has gained due importance. Open effective communication policies tend to be vital for development of positive employee engagement. Bhatla (2011) noted that engagement is a state in which employees are not only intellectually devoted but also emotionally committed with goals of organization. The company should follow the open door strategy in which both upward and downward communication is suitable communication channels. Commitment levels are high when employees participate in decision making.

Welch (2011) observed that the practical effects of model inspired the communicators to take fruitful effects of communication strategies. The positive relationship between dimensions of employee engagement and corporate communication was explained. If the employees have a right to take part in decision making and supervisor focuses then employee faithfulness becomes higher.

Swatee and Srivastava (2012) examined the impact of communication in motivating employees. The service sector requires a staff committed to work for improving their communication power. Employee loyalty is a broad term being used by management has made possible to actualize the employee performance, their commitment and vision of organization. Three levels of employee loyalty were identified i.e. loyal, not loyal and disloyal.

Roy (2013) elaborated that engaged employees give the advantage for implementing the strategies and generate the business outputs. The organizational strategy becomes the base of investing in employee engagement to strengthen it. Organizational fairness should be in line with the organizational code of conduct in terms of law, fair pay, ethics and religion. Organizational justice is person-specific in cultures and civilizations.

Anitha (2014) crystallized the key factors affecting the employee engagement and its impact on performance of employees. This causal study was conducted using survey questionnaires from managers and relationships were estimated through SEM and regression. The relationships among co-workers, teams and work environment significantly affected the employee engagement. Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) recognized that loyalty of employees with their jobs increases if coordinated and friendly work environment is provided to them. The significant change in work processes could be done through technical innovations leading to high productivity.

Sambrook, Jones and Doloriert (2014) investigated the organizational justice as a perceived fairness of exchange taking place in an organization involving individuals with superiors, subordinates, peers and the organization as a social system. The definition comes out of the organizational justice dimensions such as procedural justice, distributive justice, systematic justice and interactional justice. The research hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between job involvement and employee loyalty.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee loyalty.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee loyalty.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and employee loyalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This section draws attention on how the research problem was investigated based on hypotheses. This study is quantitative in nature to test the hypotheses. It addresses the type of study selected, time horizon of study, population, sample and procedure to gather data from the respondents. Primary data were collected from employees working in different telecom companies.

Research Assumptions

The study assumes that information collected from employees is reliable. It has been assumed that information is accurate. Data collected from respondents were kept confidential and purely used for the research purpose.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey questionnaire consists of 29 items related to four core measures of employee loyalty. This research used a convenience sampling technique for collecting data. Due to limited access to respondents, financial resources and shortage of time, data were collected from telecom firms like Mobilink, Warid, Zong, PTCL and Ufone in Lahore region. The justification behind selecting this sector is that the employees have a direct interaction with customers and

face diverse situations. Some customers believe that there exists a close competition for service provision in telecom sector.

A structured questionnaire is pre-existing measuring tool and suitably valid for the purpose. 250 questionnaires were administered out of which 190 were duly filled in. The self-reported questionnaire comprises of five parts in English language (Saks, 2006). Part 1 shows the demographic information like age, gender, qualification, designation and experience of respondents. Part 2 contains 8 items related to job involvement, 5 items of employee engagement, 6 items of perceived organizational support, 5 items of distributive justice and 5 items of employee loyalty and the responses to these items vary from 1 to 5-point Likert scale i.e. (1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree) (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The instrument was adapted and statistical tests like reliability test, descriptive statistics, correlations and linear regression analysis were applied to investigate the assumed relationships.

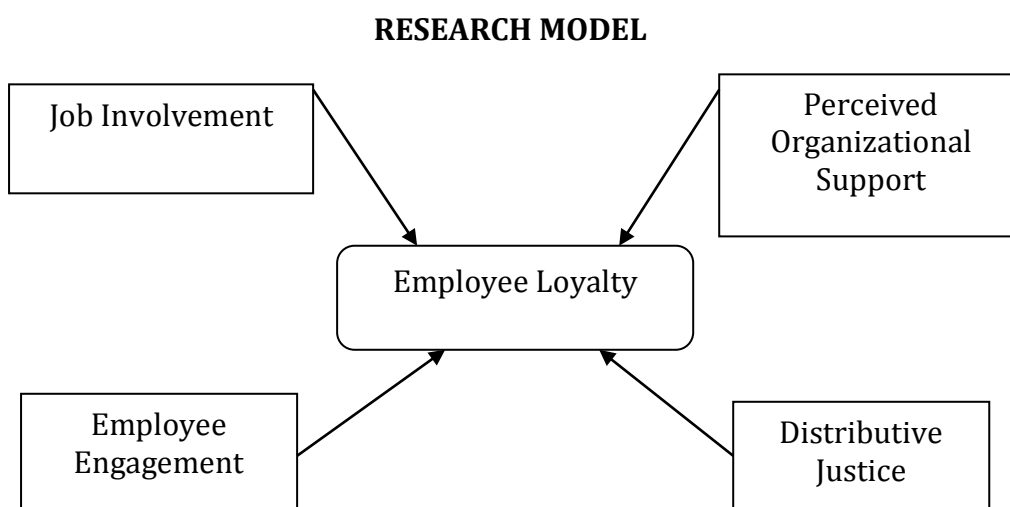


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Construct	Valid N	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Loyalty	190	29	0.883

Table1 depicts that the reliability measure of the data was checked. It was found that the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.883 which shows that the data is quite reliable. The instrument of questionnaire for collecting the primary data was adopted. According to the statisticians, the reliability must be fairly near or equal to 0.80. After conducting the pilot study, the reliability is 0.883 which shows that questionnaire is reliable for collecting data for the study.

Table 2. Descriptive & Pearson Correlations Statistics

	Mean	Std. D	1	2	3	4	5
1. Job Involvement	3.485	0.709	1.000				
2. Employee Loyalty	3.336	0.803	0.772**	1.000			
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000				
3. Employee Engagement	3.332	0.599	0.647**	0.394**	1.000		
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000			
4. Distributive Justice	3.453	0.791	0.392**	0.168*	0.685**	1.000	
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.020	.000		
5. Perceived Organizational Support	3.368	0.604	0.251**	0.423**	0.324**	0.681**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000	.000	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Mean values show the overall average responses of respondents. Mean scores of items range from 3.332 to 3.485. Standard deviation values indicate that up to what extent the values have been dispersed from their respective average central point. High standard deviation values have higher dispersion from their respective means. Consistent data of responses has lesser dispersions. Standard deviations vary from 0.599 to 0.803. There is a positive relationship among all the subscales and depict significant values at 0.01 sig. level. There is no high correlation among the subscale measures as the values are nearly equal to 0.80. No value of Pearson correlation coefficient increases the cut off value of 0.8 indicating there is no high correlation among the variables. There is no issue of multicollinearity in the data set (see table 2).

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
Job Involvement (JI)	Employee Loyalty (EL) beta=0.666 p=.000* t-stat=7.554
Employee Engagement (EE)	beta=0.253 p=.001* t-stat=3.267
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	beta=0.165 p=.181*** t-stat=2.342
Distributive Justice (DJ)	beta=0.330 p=.000* t-stat=8.729
Adjusted-R²	0.667
F-Statistic	195.555

Note: *=significance at less than 0.01

Table 3 depicts the direct and significant effect of independent variables (JI, POS, EE and DJ) on dependent variable (EL). The beta values represent that up to which extent each independent variable is causing variation in the dependent variable, these values are significant at less than 0.01 p-level positively influencing employee loyalty and t-values are greater than the benchmark value 2. The adjusted R² value depicts the predictability power of the model. The explanatory variables cause approximately 66.7% variation and change in the explained variable. The F-stat value depicts that the model is a good fit model for the purpose of the study. Overall the model in this study is a good fit model.

Table 4. Summary of Results of Hypotheses

Hypotheses		Results
H1	There is a significant positive relationship between job involvement and employee loyalty.	Supported (Table 3)
H2	There is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee loyalty.	Supported (Table 3)
H3	There is a significant positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee loyalty.	Supported (Table 3)
H4	There is a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and employee loyalty.	Supported (Table 3)

CONCLUSION

There exists a significant association between the attributes of a service organization and employee loyalty. This construct has become a crucial indicator for business success during last few decades. The loyal employees now play strategic role for their organizations. The business growth and competitive advantage can mainly be achieved by employee loyalty. The loyal employees tend to facilitate the firms in executing strategies and generating fruitful business outcomes. This study sheds light on the key influencers of employee loyalty.

The organizational role in creating loyal employee workforce is very critical. The managers of the business firms need to understand the vitality of core dimensions of employee loyalty. The employees tend to have a sense of ownership. The companies should encourage equitable practices and ample justice to their employees. Employees are truly a valuable asset to any organization so they need fair support for work-life balance. Employees and organizations are mutually dependent to meet their collective goals. The company culture needs to be integrated. The employee loyalty is a continuous process and blend of learning, improvement and action. The organizations look forward to meet the employee expectations creating a value to boost performance (Ibrahim & Al-Falasi, 2014).

Job involvement implies that satisfying job needs and employees pay more attention to their needs. Organizational commitment is an attachment attitude and it is a consistency of performance as per the standards. The employee engagement is a different term from job involvement and organizational commitment. Employee engagement shows that employees are psychologically and emotionally affiliated with their jobs to increase the productivity and profitability of firms. Loyal employees work for organizational development and innovative processes.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, the practitioners and consultants have considerable interests in employee loyalty. This study adds value to the employee behaviours that have been evaluated significantly after studying all the relevant aspects. The engaged employees perform well utilizing the job characteristics. Engaged employees have good terms with their employers and show the positive attitude and behaviour. The two-way amicable communication between top administration and employees is a healthy sign favouring business success. The engaged employees prove to be more productive throughout the organizations. The findings suggest that the employees must be embedded with a sense of purposiveness.

Distributive justice and perceived organizational support demand a business firm to provide equal advancement and growth opportunities to all the employees serving them. The satisfied employees are more loyal and should be given opportunities such as realising their potential, learning new knowledge and skills and developing their abilities. It also suggests that management requires adopting employee-oriented practices to improvise their performance. The management needs to understand the vitality of employee loyalty.

Some studies prove that business outcomes and firm performance are significantly affected by employee loyalty. Employee commitment level increases as they get themselves engaged in their organizations. Motivated workforce can be created if the employees are involved into their jobs. The highly engaged workforce is supposed to be the catalyst of achieving organizational goals pertaining to financial and non-financial parameters.

The identified factors serve as the building blocks for creating effective organizational behaviours led by managerial leadership. The disengaged employees put damaging effects on productivity levels as they withdraw from their cognitive and emotional affiliation. The engaged workforce becomes more loyal in the long run showing higher commitment towards their organizations. Loyal employees are those who are mentally affiliated, involved, emotionally attached, physically energized and completely associated with the goals of their organization. The results show that loyal and determined employees are well worthy for any organization. Employee disengagement refers that employees do not actively show their willingness to do work physically, mentally and emotionally towards their job. The engaged employees prove to be more loyal for an organization.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Budget and time constraints limited the data collection. The accuracy of results may be influenced by biases.
2. The research study is limited to telecom sector. It cannot be generalized to other service sectors and the results of this study are based on the responses of participants.
3. This study could be a reference point to other locations and sectors.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The findings reflect some new research horizons like employee morale, motivation and faithfulness of employees are required to be investigated. Work autonomy, job security, flexible work arrangements and fair compensation might be significant. Further research calls may include items involving internal and external loyalty. This study explains that how employees perceive their obligations towards their organizations. This study might help the HR recruiters for selecting employees. Job training provides the basis for loyalty of employees. There needs to verify the role of HR practices like effective recruitment strategies with financial performance of a firm for engaged workforce.

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