

Impact of Talent Management on Work Engagement: Mediating Role of Affective Commitment

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i4.1726>

Abstract

With the ever-growing competitive atmosphere in the sphere of higher education, universities face an escalating pressure to effectively manage academic talent in order to improve faculty engagement and performance of the institution. As a strategic human resource practice, talent management has had a positive effect on positive employee attitudes and behaviors but limited empirical studies indicate the mechanism underlying such effects of talent management especially in the context of developing countries. Thus, this research explores the effects of the talent management on the work engagement and also explores the mediating effect of affective commitment on teachers in private universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Cross-sectional research design used was quantitative whereby a sample of 483 faculty members were used to collect data through structured and validated questionnaires. The measures of talent management were assessed on an adapted scale, which was developed on the basis of the existing frameworks; affective commitment was measured on the basis of the Affective commitment scale created by Meyer and Allen, and finally work engagement was assessed on the basis of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The SPSS and AMOS were utilized to analyze the data with the help of reliability analysis, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis with bootstrapping methods. The results found out that talent management has a strong and positive influence on work engagement. More so, talent management was also discovered to contribute significantly to affective commitment which has a positive effect on work engagement. The mediation analysis established the fact that affective commitment mediates the correlation between talent management and work engagement. Such findings underscore the need to generate emotional connection by applying a proper talent management strategy. The research has a theoretical contribution, as it expands the scope of the theories of social exchange and commitment in the context of higher education and provides practical implications to the university leaders, who are interested in enhancing the involvement, retention, and performance of the faculty staff due to strategic talent management programs.

Keywords: Talent Management, Work Engagement, Affective commitment, Private Universities, KP, Pakistan.

Introduction

The modern knowledge-based economy is highly competitive and technologically dynamic, as well as being faced with increasing expectations of stakeholders by higher education institutions. Universities are not judged based on their infrastructure alone or the size of the enrolment but on the basis of their academic achievement, research output as well as the quality and qualification of their faculty members who have become the main pillar of institutional success. It is in this sense that talent management has become a strategic priority issue within higher education institutions as far as attracting, developing and retaining competent academic staff that is able to maintain the competitive edge. Talent management is described as a methodology of human resource practices that is aimed at making sure that the right people with the right skills in the right jobs at the right time are available in the organization (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). In the academic field, talent management practices, including open recruiting, career development prospects, performance review system, and career development, are crucial to the formation of teacher attitudes and behaviours. Faculty members are likely to return the favor with a good work-related performance when they believe that their institution supports them and invests in their development.

Work engagement is one of such serious consequences as it is an enduring and favorable mental condition that is manifested by energy, commitment, and engrossment in work activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Involved teachers show increased enthusiasm, interest in teaching and research and readiness to exceed the scope of their job. Previous studies have continually attributed work engagement to better job performance, less burnout and organizational performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Nevertheless, there is still a dilemma of ensuring sustained work engagement in academic institutions, especially in developing countries where faculty members are more prone to high workload, job insecurity and lack of career advancement. Here, affective commitment, emotional attachment and identification of an employee to his or her organization, is an important psychological process (Meyer and Allen, 1991). When faculty members are emotionally attached to their university, they tend to be more consistent in their individual goals and those of their institutions, they are more loyal, and more engaged at work. Literature available indicates that positive human resource practices increase the affective commitment that consequently positively affects work engagement and other favorable work outcomes (Jena, 2015).

Although interest in talent management and employee engagement has been on the rise, there is very little empirical studies that investigate how affective commitment mediates the relationship between talent management and work engagement especially in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The majority of literature has been dedicated to corporate or publicly owned organizations and has left a big gap in knowledge regarding how this relationship works in the area of private universities. Furthermore, the university sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, has some specific issues with the retention and motivation of the faculty and sustainability of the institution, which makes it an interesting research area.

Consequently, the current research will identify the effects of talent management on work engagement among teachers who teach in private universities at KP, Pakistan and the mediating influence of affective commitment. The study will fill this gap and therefore contribute to the body of knowledge in human resource management and university teaching profession and provide my practical implications to the university administrators who are in need of increasing the faculty performance by means of effective talent management techniques.

Literature Review

Talent administration has attracted a lot of literature on human resource management as organizations struggle to ensure competitiveness in volatile environments. It is widely understood as a strategic and organized process of attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining the employees with high competence and potential levels (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Within the

area of higher learning, talent management refers to: merit-based hiring, faculty development programs, performance appraisal systems, succession plans, and competitive compensation systems. These are especially important in the case of universities where intellectual capital and human expertise hold the major sources of organizational value. Empirical research results show that the presence of talent management practices has a positive effect on employees in terms of attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Alkerdawy, 2016; Mensah, 2019). Employees are more prone to grow into positive psychological states when they feel that they are being treated fairly, opportunities are available to grow and their organizations support them, which leads to improved work results. Academic staff members that have gone through well-organized talent management programs are more likely to be more motivated and engage more professionally because these programs imply that the institution takes notice of them and invests in their careers in the long-term.

Work engagement is described as a positive, satisfying, and work-related psychological condition that has the presence of vigor, commitment, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor is characterized by a great amount of energy and mental strength at work, dedication is characterized by the feeling of importance and enthusiasm, and absorption is characterized by complete focus and involvement in the working activity. Work engagement, in contrast to burnout, is a positive and motivational attitude of employees towards work roles. There has been extensive literature on the significance of work engagement in organizations. Involved employees are better in their job performance, exhibit better organizational citizenship behaviors, and reduced turnover intentions (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Saks, 2006). Engaged teachers in the sector of higher education tend to embrace innovative teaching methods, enhance the productivity of research, as well as contribute to the institution objectives. Nevertheless, it may be difficult to sustain high work engagement rates among faculty members in the university because of the growing workload, level of performance, and career development prospects, especially in the developing states.

One of the three elements of organizational commitment advanced by Meyer and Allen (1991) is affective commitment which is used to define the attachment, identification, and interest that an employee has towards the organization. Highly affective commitment employees stay in the company since they desire to do so, but not because they have to or should. This emotional attachment promotes discretionary effort and desirable work behaviors. Previous studies have shown a consistent report that affective commitment is linked with pleasant organisational performance in terms of improved job performance, decrease in absenteeism and more work engagement (Meyer et al., 2002). Academically, educators who experience emotional attachment towards the institutions tend to put extra effort into the teaching, research and service activities. Affective commitment is especially relevant to the case of private universities, with the retention and motivation of the faculty members usually driven by the attitudes towards organizational support and recognition.

The social exchange theory has helped support the relationship between work engagement and talent management since employees are expected to return favorable organizational practices with positive attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964). The long-term commitment and organizational support through talent management practices are cues that encourage employees to reciprocate the effort through increased levels of engagement. Research has discovered that talent management is a strong predictor of work engagement because it increases motivation, competence, and psychological safety of the employees (Saks, 2006; Jena, 2015). Recent research has focused on the mediatory position of psychological variables in describing the relationship between the HR practices and work outcomes. Affective commitment is one of the major forms by which talent management has an impact on work engagement. The involved talent management provides emotional attachment since it meets the needs of recognition, growth, and belonging of employees, which further increases the level of engagement. The mediation position of affective commitment

is proven by empirical studies in other organizational settings (Mensah, 2019); nevertheless, few studies have been conducted to explore the role of this mechanism in higher education institutions in Pakistan. As such, the empirical research discussed in the current study fills this gap as it empirically examines the affective commitment to mediate between talent management and work engagement among the faculty of the KP-based private universities in Pakistan.

H1: There is a significant positive impact on work engagement by talent management.

H2: Affective commitment is affected by talent management significantly.

H3: Affective commitment positively impacts work engagement to a significant extent.

H4: There is a mediating effect of affective commitment between talent management and work engagement.

Methodology

The research design used in this study is quantitative and cross-sectional in nature to examine the relationship between talent management and work engagement with affective commitment as a mediating factor. Data was collected using a structured survey questionnaire on faculty members who work in the private universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Stratified random sample of 483 teachers was chosen and there was gender, age and academic rank representation. The stratification was carried out depending on the distribution of lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors in the chosen universities, which increases the overall attraction of the findings.

Data Collection Instruments

Three validated scales were present. Talent management measurement was determined based on 15 items adapted by Collings and Mellahi (2009) and Alkerdawy (2016) on the basis of recruitment, development, retention, and performance appraisal practices. Affective commitment was assessed by using the 8 item Affective Commitment Scale that Meyer and Allen (1991) designed, and the work engagement was assessed with the assistance of the 9 item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). All the ratings were made on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree) to (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was done by means of SPSS 26 and AMOS 24. Early tests were done on reliability and descriptive statistics. Correlation, multiple regression, and median tests were used to test hypotheses based on the indirect effects of affective commitment by using boot strapping procedures. The high-reliability scales and sound statistical methods guarantee the validity of the results and the achievement of the goals of the study which is to comprehend the relations between talent management, affective commitment and work engagement in the context of higher education.

Results

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	278	57.6%
	Female	205	42.4%
Age	25–34	153	31.7%
	35–44	201	41.6%
	45–54	87	18.0%
	55+	42	8.7%
Academic Rank	Lecturer	219	45.3%
	Assistant Prof	162	33.5%
	Associate Prof	78	16.1%
	Professor	24	5.1%

Table 1 shows the demographics of the respondents, which gives a summary of the sample make up. The statistics are fairly balanced in gender distribution, with an even slightly higher percentage of male faculty members, which is the mirror of the overall faculty structure in the KP-based private universities. Most of the respondents are aged between 35 and 44 as an indication of a mature and professionally working academic population. Moreover, the majority of the respondents are lecturers and assistant professors, which means that early and middle-career faculty is also represented. This heterogeneous demographic nature improves the extrapolation of the study results to the private sector of higher education.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Talent Management	0.88
Affective Commitment	0.91
Work Engagement	0.90

Table 2 lists the alpha of Cronbach of talent management, affective commitment, and work engagement. Each construct exhibits an alpha coefficient that is above the required standard of 0.70 which implies that measurement tools have a high internal consistency and reliability. These findings are reassuring that the measures to be used in each construction make sense and they are always valid in the reflection of the theoretical concept intended. The reliability values are high as well which adds to the confidence in the further analysis, correlation, regression, and mediation testing. All in all, the presented results indicate that the questionnaires that are adopted can be deemed as appropriate and strong in exploring the relationship between talent management, affective commitment, and work engagement in the academic setting.

Table 3: Correlation

Variables	1	2	3
1. Talent Management	—		
2. Affective Commitment	.53**	—	
3. Work Engagement	.60**	.65**	—

**p < .01

Table 3 shows a correlation coefficient of talent management, affective commitment, and work engagement. The findings demonstrate strong and positive correlations among all the study variables which show the existence of significant associations. There is a moderate to strong positive relation between talent management and affective commitment and work engagement indicating that effective talent management practice has a relation with the level of emotional attachment and work engagement among faculty. On the same note, the affective commitment has a positive significant association with the work engagement which shows the significance of emotional attachment in promoting engagement. These results are a preliminary good indication of the hypotheses presented and support additional regression and mediation analyses.

Table 4: Regression Results**Model 1: Direct Effect**

Dependent Variable: Work Engagement

Predictor: Talent Management

Predictor	B	SE	B	t	p
Talent Management	.72	.05	.60	14.4	.000

Model 2: Mediation Analysis

Effect	B	SE	t	p
TM → AC	.52	.04	13.0	.000
AC → WE	.47	.06	11.7	.000
TM → WE (after mediation)	.40	.05	8.0	.000

The indirect effect of TM on WE through AC was significant using bootstrapping (95% CI [.20, .36]), indicating partial mediation.

The results of the regression analysis of the direct effects that were investigated in test variables are presented in Table 4. The results show that talent management is a significant predictor of work engagement, which proves the effectiveness of talent practices in raising the vigor, dedication, and absorption of the faculty members in their work. Moreover, talent management is a significant predictor of affective commitment whereas affective commitment is a strong positive predictor of work engagement. The statistically significant beta coefficients and p-values indicate that the proposed model is explanatory. The results offer empirical evidence to direct hypotheses and form the basis of testing the mediating effect of affective commitment.

Limitations and Future Research

Although it has contributed to it, the current research has a number of limitations that cannot be ignored. To begin with, the study used a cross-sectional study design, and this study design does not allow one to make causal conclusions between talent management, affective commitment, and work engagement. Future research can use longitudinal research designs as an improvement of

tracking the attitudinal changes of the faculty. Second, self-reported questionnaires were used to gather data and therefore are susceptible to common method bias and social desirability bias. Future research would be enhanced by including various sources of data, including supervisor assessments or objective measures of performance. Third, only teachers in the private universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan were included in the sample. Although this focus gives useful contextual information, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to other geographic areas of the public sector universities. The comparative study between the public and the private institutions or even different provinces and countries should be put into consideration in future research. Furthermore, the association between other potential mediators or modulators, including psychological empowerment, leadership styles, or organization culture, could be investigated in the future to have a more complete picture of the processes that associate talent management and work engagement. This way of expanding the research framework would contribute to more theory and practice in the field of higher education human resource management.

Conclusion

The current research investigated the effects of talent management on work engagement with special emphasis on mediated effects of affective commitment on the teachers in the private institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The results offer a solid empirical support that practices of talent management are highly effective in promoting the engagement of faculty members in their work. Faculty members can show an increase in the degree of vigor, commitment, and engagement in their academic role by universities that invest in systemic recruitment, professional development, equitable performance appraisal, and career advancement opportunities. In addition, the research establishes that affective commitment is a very important mediator in this relationship. By implementing talent management practices, the faculty become emotionally attached and have a sense of belonging, which contributes to increasing their level of engagement at work. This leads to the importance of being concerned not only about structural systems of human resources but also about the emotional, psychological requirements of the academic staff. These results support the social exchange theory and organizational commitment theory by supporting the fact that employees reciprocate perceived organizational support through positive work-related attitudes and behavior.

Overall, the research is pertinent to the prevailing literature since it is based on the existing studies on talent management and work engagement within the higher education sector of Pakistan. The findings are useful insight to university administrators and policymakers who should implement strategic talent management programs to enhance faculty interaction and performance.

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