

Relationship of Empowerment, Organizational Culture and Organizational Commitment on Employee Performance in Pakistan Railways

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Abstract

The transportation sector, recognized as a major driver of economic growth, has been the focus of extensive academic and policy-oriented studies. This paper thoroughly examines the intricate dynamics of Pakistan's railway sector, covering its historical significance, current challenges, and future potential. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, the study draws on a comprehensive literature review and empirical data to analyze the railways' role in economic development, the specific challenges faced by Pakistan Railways, and the essential role of employee performance in ensuring sustainability and growth. Additionally, the paper explores the influence of empowerment and organizational culture on employee performance, with organizational commitment considered as a mediating factor. Based on responses from 100 railway officers in BS-17 to BS-21, the findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between empowerment and employee performance, as well as between organizational culture and employee performance. However, organizational commitment mediates only the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance, not between empowerment and employee performance.

Key words: Pakistan Railways, Employee Performance, Empowerment, Organizational Culture and Organizational Commitment.

Introduction

Transportation infrastructure, particularly railways, is crucial for economic sustainability, enhancing market access, trade, and employment opportunities, while supporting land development, reducing travel times, attracting investments, and alleviating traffic congestion (Sun et al., 2019; Gholamizadeh et al., 2022; Majid et al., 2022; Qasim, 2021). Pakistan's railway sector faces significant challenges, including declining performance, inadequate investments, competition from other transport modes, and policy biases favoring roads. Legacy issues from the colonial era, overstaffing in non-critical areas, managerial gaps, frequent staff transfers, and weak talent mapping exacerbate inefficiencies. Moreover, challenges like political interference, favoritism, and the lack of effective HR strategies weaken employee commitment and motivation. This, results in delays in trains operations, inefficient use of resources, reduced revenue, and a lack of accountability (Tahir & Tahir, 2020; Khan, 2015; Ferreira, 2021). Employees are crucial for operational efficiency and service quality. Globally, and particularly in the context of Pakistan, there is a rising acknowledgment that giving preference to employees can significantly improve an organization's overall performance (Alefari et al., 2018; Wahyunia et al., 2022). Similarly, the culture of every organization and its environment plays several roles, such as stimulating performance and successfulness. Therefore, to successfully manage performance, it is imperative to build a suitable culture in the organization (Stiríteská & Sein, 2021). The company with entrenched organizational culture performs better and affects the performance of workers positively. Consequently, employee dissatisfaction with the organization or company as a whole will have an impact on their dissatisfaction in dealing with their work and will undoubtedly affect their performance (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). In addition, employee empowerment plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee

performance. Employee empowerment involves providing employees with the necessary skills, knowledge, independence, effective communication, and motivation through incentives and rewards to enhance their performance (Khan et al., 2020). The positive impacts of employee empowerment include increased employee responsibility, confidence, stress reduction, improved work-life balance, and enhanced organizational efficiency, with numerous studies affirming a positive relationship between employee empowerment and performance (Ahmad & Manzoor, 2017). Organizational commitment is considered as one of the main factors in defining individual and organizational performance and effectiveness (Eliyana et al., 2019). In this study, organizational commitment is used as a mediator between, empowerment, organization culture and employee performance. According to social exchange theory, employees join organizations with the expectation of a conducive working environment and culture, utilizing their skills and knowledge to achieve personal and organizational goals (Melkamu, 2023). Positive exchange relationships result in increased organizational commitment. However, research on these relationships, particularly in public sector organizations like Pakistan Railways, remains limited, with gaps in studies on officer-level performance and conflicting findings on the interplay between empowerment, culture, commitment, and performance, emphasizing the need for further investigation (Fareed, Su & Awan, 2022; Tampi et al., 2022). The prevailing situation indicates a need for urgent intervention to address these systemic issues and enhance employee performance, which is crucial for the overall revival of the Pakistan Railways.

Literature Review

Employee Performance

Employee performance, essential for organizational success, depends on skills, experience, dedication, and timeliness, driving collective achievement and enhancing effectiveness (Kenedi et al., 2022). It includes both quantitative and qualitative outputs aligned with organizational objectives, evaluated through behavioral and productivity metrics (Dike et al., 2021). While definitions vary, they consistently emphasize meeting obligations and contributing to goals (Hussain, 2020; Okochi & Ateke, 2020). Global studies, such as Liu et al. (2019) in China, highlight key predictors of rail employee performance, including cognitive abilities, workload, job insecurity, and safety leadership. Job enlargement boosts performance in Kenya (Gichuki & Munjuri, 2018), while mindfulness and adaptability are critical in Iran (Hashemi et al., 2019). Thailand emphasizes HR management, organizational culture, and quality management practices (Sivalai & Rojnirutti, 2018). Effective performance is essential for delivering efficient services and reducing safety risks (Majid et al., 2022).

Empowerment

Employee empowerment is a key organizational strategy to enhance output and foster employee engagement, flexibility, and motivation (Raveendran, 2023). Empowered employees, equipped with decision-making authority, tend to be more innovative and proactive, leading to improved performance, job satisfaction, and efficiency (Rahmi et al., 2020). Empowerment also builds skills and confidence, though challenges like overconfidence, loss of managerial control, increased costs, or misuse of autonomy can arise. In the public sector, empowerment boosts service quality and innovation, but excessive formalization may limit its effectiveness (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2011). Scholars define empowerment as equipping employees with skills, autonomy, and responsibilities to foster motivation and accountability. It involves removing barriers, strengthening management-employee relationships (Bani-Melhem et al., 2020), delegating authority to create a positive work environment (Andi Kele, 2020), and sharing resources and information to enhance team dynamics (Khan et al., 2020). Empowerment emphasizes granting employees the authority to influence decision-making, enabling greater participation and a stronger sense of ownership over their roles (Andika & Darmanto, 2020).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a defining element within groups where shared behaviors, attitudes, norms, values, and history shape collective identity and guide actions (Ali et al., 2021). Ahammad et al. (2016) emphasize its pivotal role in determining organizational effectiveness and productivity, asserting that culture dictates how strategies are executed and navigated. In contrast, weak cultures hinder change and strategy execution. Zeqir and Alija (2016) define organizational culture as a set of understood principles and rules that guide employee behavior and performance. Paais & Pattiruhu (2020) underscore its significance in driving employee performance and organizational success, likening it to a foundational element akin to the credibility of a house. In the public sector, organizational culture is shaped by formal rules and ethics, influencing accountability and ethical conduct amidst challenges like bureaucracy and corruption (Niswaty & Dhahri, 2021). Within the rail transport sector, organizational culture adapts to modernization demands, focusing on technical expertise, client satisfaction, and unique motivational strategies amidst financial constraints (Jenaru & Daniel, 2020).

Empowerment and Employee Performance

Employee empowerment has consistently been shown to positively influence employee performance across various studies (Andika & Darmanto, 2020; Ekowati et al., 2021). This relationship is supported by findings indicating that empowered employees exhibit greater self-confidence and motivation, leading to enhanced organizational and individual outcomes (Suprpto & Widigdo, 2021). Research underscores that empowerment, characterized by sharing authority, resources, and expertise with employees, enhances job satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately, productivity and effectiveness (Adnan et al., 2021). However, conflicting findings exist, such as reports suggesting no meaningful correlation between empowerment and performance (Rahmi et al., 2020), indicating a need for further exploration to clarify the relationship. Despite inconsistencies, the majority of studies affirm that employee empowerment positively impacts organizational performance across diverse sectors and geographic regions. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: There is a significant relationship between empowerment and employee performance.

Organizational Culture and Employee Performance.

The relationship between organizational culture and employee performance has been extensively explored across various studies, consistently indicating a significant positive influence (Narayana, 2017). Organizational culture serves as a critical framework shaping employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes (Maamari & Saheb, 2018). Research underscores that a strong organizational culture enhances employee commitment, productivity, creativity, and innovation (Sihombing et al., 2018). This positive correlation has been observed across diverse sectors and geographic regions, highlighting the importance of fostering a supportive and aligned organizational culture to optimize performance (Saria et al., 2022). Despite the predominance of positive findings, some studies suggest conflicting results regarding the impact of organizational culture on performance (Beltran, 2020). These discrepancies underscore the need for further research, particularly in specific sectors like Pakistan's railways, to better understand the nuanced relationship between organizational culture and employee job performance. Addressing this gap can provide valuable insights into enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee outcomes within Pakistan's railway industry. Thus, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H2: There is a significant relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

Organizational Commitment as a Mediator

Organizational commitment refers to the loyalty and emotional attachment employees demonstrate towards their employer, reflecting their readiness to actively contribute and stay engaged with their work (Lee & Reade, 2018). This concept is pivotal in management studies, where it correlates strongly with job satisfaction and performance, influencing how employees perceive and interact

with the organization. In today's competitive landscape, maintaining high levels of organizational commitment is crucial for retaining talented employees, who are increasingly seen as essential assets for organizational success in a knowledge-based economy (Saleem et al., 2019). Factors influencing organizational commitment include individual traits, organizational practices, job experiences, role dynamics, and leadership behaviors, highlighting its multifaceted nature in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. Historically, traditional organizations prioritized task-oriented goals over employee commitment, leading to high turnover rates. Modern approaches recognize employees as central to organizational competitiveness, emphasizing the importance of commitment, engagement, and satisfaction (Ghiyats & Aulia, 2020). High organizational commitment enhances employee enthusiasm, productivity, creativity, and innovation, while reducing absenteeism, turnover, and workplace conflicts, ultimately stabilizing and improving organizational performance. Furthermore, commitment aligns with employees' career growth aspirations, motivating them to contribute effectively to organizational goals (Akeke et al., 2015). Organizational commitment often serves as a mediator in studies on employee performance, influencing the relationship between competence, organizational culture, and performance outcomes (Rantesalu et al., 2016). It also mediates the impact of motivation, learning opportunities, culture, and leadership on performance, showcasing its critical role in connecting organizational factors with performance results (Dewi et al., 2019). These findings highlight the strategic importance of fostering organizational commitment to enhance employee performance and retention, providing valuable insights for management practices.

Organizational Commitment, Empowerment and Employee Performance

Research consistently demonstrates a positive correlation between employee empowerment and organizational commitment, with empowered employees displaying greater emotional attachment and alignment with organizational goals (Abu Rumman et al., 2021). This commitment fosters a sense of belonging and enhances the achievement of organizational objectives (Bin Abdullah et al., 2015). Empirical studies, however, show variability in the impact of empowerment on different dimensions of organizational commitment. While affective commitment often shows the strongest and most consistent positive relationship (Limpanitgul et al., 2017), factors like employees' education and organizational context can moderate these effects, necessitating customized empowerment strategies (Marta et al., 2021). Despite its general benefits, empowerment can also lead to challenges, such as employee strain or increased turnover intentions, requiring careful management (Seibert et al., 2011). Addressing these complexities through further research can help organizations refine empowerment initiatives to enhance commitment and overall performance effectively. Therefore, based on the limited evidences, following hypothesis is formulated.

H3: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between empowerment and employee performance.

Organizational Commitment, Organizational Culture and Employee Performance

Research highlights the positive impact of organizational culture on employee performance, emphasizing that core values such as hard work, reliability, respect, and innovation foster improved performance and adherence to ethical standards (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). Organizational culture not only directly enhances employee performance but also significantly influences it through organizational commitment as a mediator (Rantesalu et al., 2016; Suryaningsih et al., 2018). Multiple studies, including those by Nikpour (2017) and Dewi et al. (2019), confirm that organizational commitment strengthens the relationship between culture and performance. These findings underscore the importance of a strong organizational culture coupled with effective leadership to boost employee commitment and performance (Utama et al., 2018). Given the critical role of organizational culture in driving employee outcomes, further investigation into how organizational commitment mediates this relationship is particularly relevant for public sector organizations, such as Pakistan Railways, to enhance their effectiveness and employee performance. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual framework elaborates that empowering employees and fostering a positive organization culture improve the performance of employees in public sector organization. When employees are empowered with greater authority and responsibility in a workplace grounded in shared values and trust, their commitment to the organization naturally deepens. This sense of belonging fuels their motivation and effort, driving improved outcomes. The framework draws on both practical experience and research to offer actionable strategies for fostering supportive and effective work environments. By prioritizing these principles, organizations can create spaces where employees feel valued and inspired, leading to mutual success and growth.

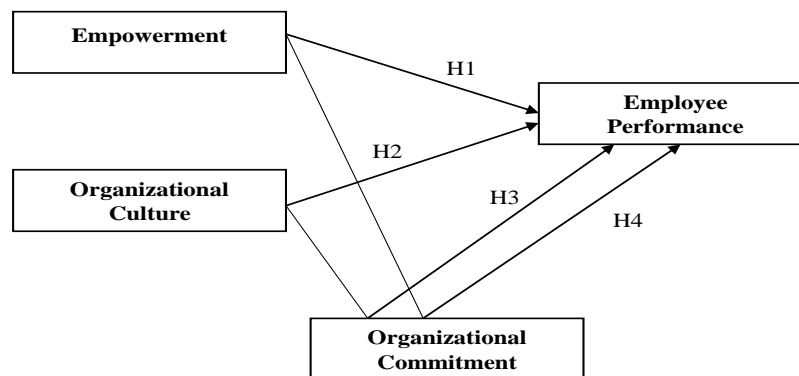


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The target population of the study consists of 811 employees of Pakistan Railways working in positions from BPS 17 to BPS 22. From the population, a sample of 100 employees was selected using simple random sampling, a method chosen for its effectiveness in reducing bias and enhancing the generalizability of findings (Saadouli & Al-Khanbashi, 2020). Employee performance was assessed using an adapted version of William and Anderson's (1991) instrument, focusing on task performance (in-role behavior). This evaluation included 7 items measuring overall performance, task completion, and competency. For empowerment, the study utilized an 11-item measure adapted from Bowen and Lawler's four empowerment practices, which include performance-based rewards, work process discretion, access to job-related skills, and information on goals and performance, (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2011). To measure organizational culture, this study adapted the research instrument provided by Alvi et al. (2014), consisting of 7 items that assess two levels: bureaucratic organizational culture and supportive organizational culture. To measure organizational commitment, the instruments is adapted from the research Allen & Meyer (1990). There are 6 six items of each dimension of organizational commitment i.e. i.e., affective, continuance, and normative. Responses to each item in the study were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. Questionnaires were distributed in both soft copy (in the form of a Google Form) and hard copies based on the convenience of participants. 150 questionnaires were distributed and 105 were returned with 70% response rate. The acceptable response rate is between 50% and 80% (Ali et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results of statistical analysis used in this research.

Descriptive Analysis

Missing Value Analysis

Missing data, where certain values are unavailable for specific variables, is a common challenge in research (Kang, 2013). In this study, five questionnaires had twelve missing responses, so they were removed from the analysis to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results.

Assessment of Outliers

Outliers often need special consideration in data analysis because they can distort results and influence statistical conclusions. While removing outliers can help correct skewed distributions, it also has its drawbacks. Leys et al. (2019) suggest that outliers should generally be kept, as they typically don't have a major impact on statistical outcomes. For this reason, the outliers were retained in this study.

Demographics of the Respondents

The demographic profiles of the respondents are given below:

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Demographics	Valid N	Frequency	Percent
Gender			
Female	100	23	23
Male		77	77
Age			
Less than 25 years	100	2	2
25-30 years		21	21
31-35 years		24	24
36-40 years		18	18
More than 40 years		35	35
Qualification			
Bachelors	100	45	45
Master		36	36
M. Phill		16	16
Others		3	3
Level/Grade in the organization			
BS-17	100	33	33
BS-18		37	37
BS-19		15	15
BS-20		11	11
BS-21		4	4
Experience			
Less than 5 years	100	33	33
5-9 years		17	17
10-14 years		21	21
15-20 years		19	19
More than 20 years		10	10

Model Assessment

This study utilized the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method to investigate the research model, conducted through Smart-PLS software (Ringle et al., 2020). Following the two-stage analytical approach recommended by Matthews et al. (2018), the analysis first evaluated the measurement model before moving on to assess the structural model.

Assessment of Measurement Model

The measurement model involves an examination of the quality of the constructs, encompassing assessments of both reliability and validity. According to Blumberg *et al.*, (2014), an instrument is deemed reliable if it consistently produces reliable results, while validity signifies the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the specific concept it intends to gauge. The assessment of the measurement model encompasses various aspects, including evaluating the reliability of individual items measuring each latent construct, examining internal consistency reliability (i.e., construct reliability), assessing discriminant validity, and confirming convergent validity for each reflective construct (Hair *et al.*, 2021). For CR, 0.70 is the threshold criterion (Akindele, 2023). Moreover, the convergent validity of the constructs was assessed by assessing the factor loadings as well as the average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair *et al.*, (2016), factor loadings ≥ 0.708 ensure statistical significance, with 0.6-0.7 deemed acceptable for factor loadings in social science studies, and an AVE > 0.5 indicating adequate convergent validity (Chergarova, 2020).

In the context of the present study, this methodical assessment resulted in the deletion of 15 out of 43 items measuring four reflective constructs, ensuring that only the most reliable and valid indicators were retained for further analysis using Partial Least Squares (PLS) (See Figure 2). Eliminating them would not have resulted in notable improvements in either Average Variance Extracted (AVE) or Composite Reliability (CR). Therefore, retaining these items was deemed appropriate, as they collectively enhance the measurement model's robustness and accuracy in representing the underlying constructs. Consequently, all retained items are considered acceptable and reliable indicators for their respective reflective latent constructs, ensuring the integrity of the study's measurement model. The graphical representation of model in PLS is given below:

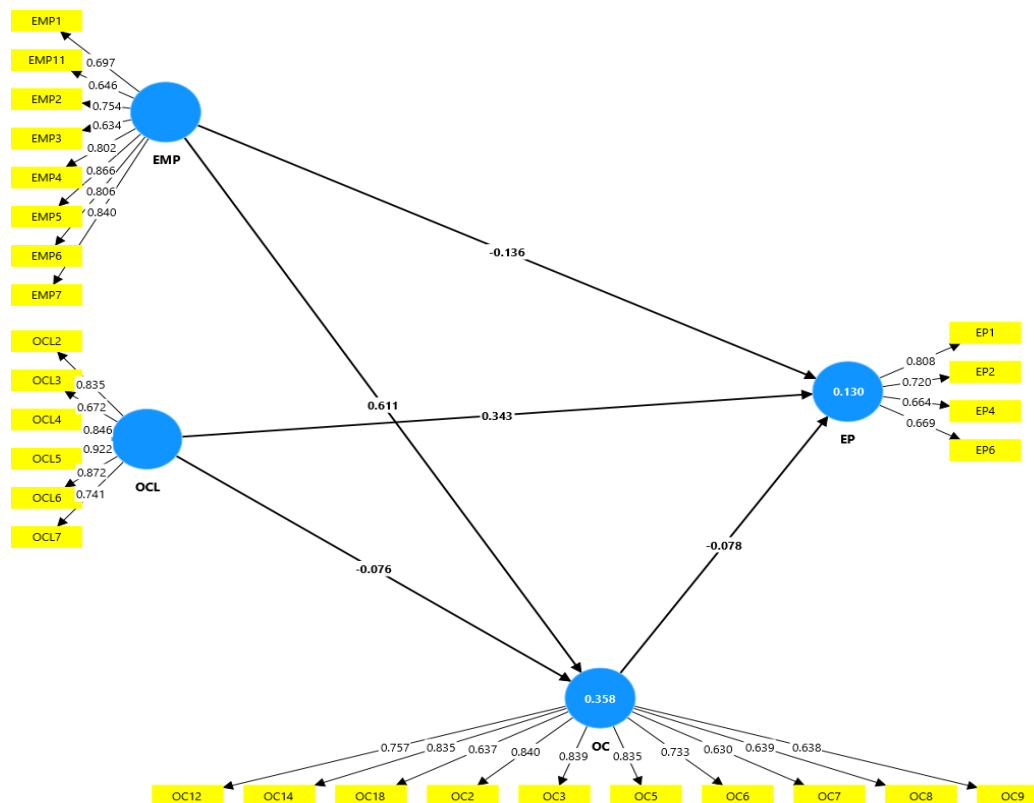


Figure 2. Graphical Representation of Model

Internal Consistency Reliability

In a study by Hair et al. (2017), composite reliability (CR) was favored over Cronbach's alpha due to its ability to account for differing indicator loadings. CR values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater reliability. Typically, CR values of 0.60 to 0.70 are acceptable for exploratory research, while values between 0.70 and 0.90 are satisfactory for more advanced studies. In this study, Table 2 summarizes alpha values, item loadings, and CR values. The calculation of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability indicated satisfactory reliability at the construct level, using the conventional threshold criteria of 0.7 for Cronbach's alpha and also 0.7 for composite reliability (Purwanto, 2021).

Table 2. Composite Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
EMP	0.896	0.915
EP	0.7	0.808
OC	0.909	0.924
OCL	0.9	0.924

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity, a critical aspect of assessing measurement quality, evaluates the degree to which responses on one item correlate with responses on other items measuring the same construct. Hair et al. (2017) emphasizes the importance of considering item loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity in reflective measures, particularly in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Factor loadings exceeding 0.708 signify that the factor accounts for 50% of the variance for a variable, indicating strong convergent validity. Items with loadings below 0.4 are recommended for deletion, while those between 0.4 and 0.7 should be reconsidered only if removing them increases composite reliability or AVE above specified thresholds (Al-Zwainy, & Al-Marsomi, 2023). AVE, representing the total variance in indicators accounted for by latent variables, serves as another indicator of convergent validity, with a cutoff point of 0.5 suggested by Hair et al. (2017).

Table 3. Convergent Validity

Construct	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EMP	0.578
EP	0.515
OC	0.553
OCL	0.67

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is crucial for validating a research model by ensuring that each construct is distinct within the theoretical framework. It measures how empirically distinct various constructs are from one another, with common assessment techniques including cross-loadings analysis and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Cross-loadings verify that indicators load more strongly on their respective constructs, while the Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with its correlations with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity when the AVE exceeds the correlations (Fauzi, 2022). Additionally, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio method enhances discriminant validity assessment by ensuring distinct construct relationships (Sarstedt et al., 2022). By employing all three methods i.e. cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker, and HTMT, the researchers can ensure a rigorous evaluation of discriminant validity, strengthening the reliability and validity of their findings.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criteria for Discriminant Validity

Construct	EMP	EP	OC	OCL
EMP	0.76			
EP	-0.104	0.718		
OC	0.594	-0.137	0.744	
OCL	0.23	0.307	0.064	0.819

Table 5. Cross loadings

Items	EMP	EP	OC	OCL
EMP1	0.697	0.003	0.395	0.178
EMP11	0.646	0.065	0.222	0.245
EMP2	0.754	-0.011	0.475	0.153
EMP3	0.634	0.051	0.273	0.435
EMP4	0.802	-0.101	0.486	0.2
EMP5	0.866	-0.172	0.609	0.119
EMP6	0.806	-0.109	0.445	0.174
EMP7	0.84	-0.175	0.508	0.109
EP1	-0.03	0.808	-0.084	0.334
EP2	-0.073	0.72	-0.063	0.189
EP4	-0.127	0.664	-0.198	0.092
EP6	-0.105	0.669	-0.084	0.193
OC12	0.486	-0.135	0.757	-0.013
OC14	0.418	-0.117	0.835	0.068
OC18	0.228	-0.21	0.637	0.003
OC2	0.472	-0.125	0.84	0.022
OC3	0.675	-0.13	0.839	0.115
OC5	0.396	-0.115	0.835	0.005
OC6	0.45	-0.026	0.733	0.058
OC7	0.315	-0.054	0.63	0.151
OC8	0.426	-0.088	0.639	-0.003
OC9	0.314	-0.012	0.638	0.081
OCL2	0.282	0.301	0.079	0.835
OCL3	0.003	0.292	-0.068	0.672
OCL4	0.286	0.203	0.066	0.846
OCL5	0.263	0.254	0.127	0.922
OCL6	0.141	0.239	0.07	0.872
OCL7	0.138	0.166	0.037	0.741

Table 6. HTMT

	EMP	EP	OC	OCL
EMP				
EP	0.19			
OC	0.591	0.199		
OCL	0.308	0.342	0.118	

Indicator Multicollinearity

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used to assess multicollinearity in regression analysis by showing how much the variance of a regression coefficient increases due to correlations among predictor variables (Hair et al., 2017). Generally, VIF values above 5 or 10 indicate significant multicollinearity, which may require further investigation or the removal of highly correlated predictors. However, as noted by Hair et al. (2016), multicollinearity is not a concern when VIF values are below 5. As shown in Table 7, all VIF values in this study are below 5, confirming that multicollinearity is not an issue.

Table 7. Multicollinearity

Items	VIF
EMP1	1.906
EMP11	1.724
EMP2	2.157
EMP3	1.959
EMP4	2.397
EMP5	3.657
EMP6	2.747
EMP7	2.896
EP1	1.317
EP2	1.38
EP4	1.333
EP6	1.209
OC12	2.718
OC14	3.771
OC18	1.808
OC2	3.61
OC3	3.174
OC5	3.237
OC6	2.162
OC7	2.133
OC8	1.97
OC9	1.972
OCL2	2.407
OCL3	1.452
OCL4	2.907
OCL5	4.39
OCL6	3.783
OCL7	2.156

Assessment of Structural Model

After confirming the properties of the measurement model, the subsequent step involves evaluating the structural model within the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) framework. This section presents the second phase, focusing on assessing the explanatory power and significance of hypothesized paths, (Anabila et al., 2020).

Hypotheses Testing for Direct Relationships

The structural model's path coefficients were evaluated through an examination of the regression weights within the inner model and the significance of hypothesized paths using bootstrap t-values with 10,000 sub-samples.

Table 8. Direct Hypothesis: EMP->EP

Hypothesis	Relation	Beta Coefficient	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
H1	EMP -> EP	0.342	0.096	3.568	0.000	supported

H1: There is significant relationship between empowerment and employee performance.

The results shows that empowerment demonstrates a significant and positive impact on employee performance (H1: $\beta=0.342$, $t=3.568$, $p<0.001$). The results indicate that higher levels of empowerment are associated with increased employee performance, highlighting the positive influence of empowerment on employee performance.

Table 9. Direct Hypothesis: OCL->EP

Hypothesis	Relation	Beta Coefficient	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Decision
H2	OCL -> EP	0.343	0.093	3.693	0.000	supported

H2: There is significant relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

The results revealed that a positive and significant relation between organizational culture and employee performance (H2: $\beta= 0.343$, $t=3.693$, $p<0.001$). This result implies that a positive organizational culture is likely to enhance employee performance, supporting the proposed hypothesis H2.

Mediator

Organizational commitment serves as a mediator in research, clarifying how transformational leadership impacts outcomes like employee performance. It reveals the mechanism through which independent variables influence dependent ones, making it essential for understanding organizational dynamics (Maseer *et al.*, 2022).

Table 10. Structural Model: Bootstrapping Results for Indirect Effects

Total Effect				Direct Effect			Indirect Effect						Decision
β	T	P	H3	β	T	p	β	SE	t	p	CI 95%		
											L	U	
0.342	3.568	0	EMP -> OC -> EP	0.341	3.447	0.001	0.001	0.034	0.032	0.975	-0.066	0.068	Not Supported
0.349	3.784	0	OCL->OC->EP	0.343	3.693	0	0.1	0.03	3.334	0.001	0.053	0.15	Supported

H3: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between empowerment and employee performance.

The results revealed that an insignificant mediating effect of organizational commitment on relation between empowerment and employee performance (H3: $\beta= 0.342$, $t= 3.447$, $p>0.05$).

H4: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

The results revealed that there is a significant mediating effect of organizational commitment on relation between organizational culture and employee performance (H4: $\beta = 0.349$, $t = 3.693$, $p < 0.001$).

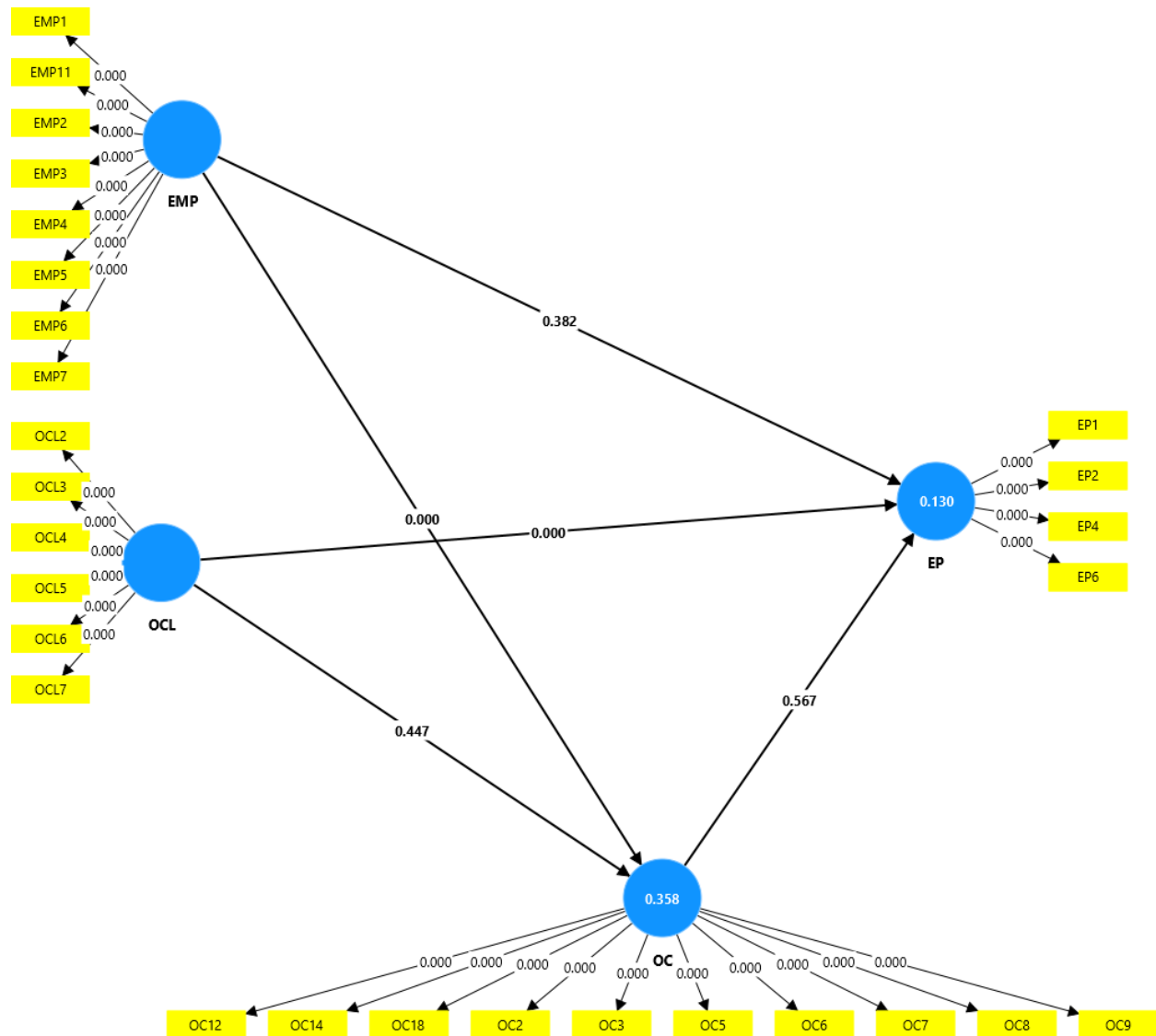


Figure 3. Graphical Representation of Mediation

Assessment of the level of R-Square

In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the coefficient of determination, or R-squared (R^2), assesses the predictive accuracy of structural models by quantifying how much variance in endogenous constructs is explained by exogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2017). R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better predictive accuracy, though acceptable thresholds vary by discipline; for instance, an R^2 as low as 0.10 can be acceptable in predicting stock returns (Raithel et al., 2012). General thresholds for PLS-SEM suggested as 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 for substantial, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively.

Table 11. R-Square

Variable	R-square
EP	0.13

Findings and Discussions

Employee empowerment significantly enhances employee performance by improving motivation, innovation, adaptability, and skill development, contributing to organizational success through knowledge expansion and motivational mediation (Suprpto & Widigdo, 2021; Andika & Darmanto, 2020). Supported by Social Exchange Theory (SET), empowerment fosters commitment, motivation, and productivity as employees reciprocate positive treatment (AlKahtani et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2020). In Pakistan Railways, empowerment drives officer performance by promoting innovation and decision-making, improving teamwork, and enhancing organizational effectiveness (Ahmed et al., 2022; Hieu, 2020). Research also reveals that organizational culture positively influences performance, with supportive cultures enhancing employee attitudes, behaviors, productivity, and commitment (Sem, 2022; Maamari & Saheb, 2018). However, Pakistan Railways faces deep-rooted cultural challenges like corruption and inefficiency, undermining performance (Ilyas et al., 2020). The study does not support the mediating role of organizational commitment between empowerment and performance, suggesting that while empowerment can foster commitment, lack of support or excessive responsibility may lead to disengagement and reduced performance (Limon, 2022). Social Exchange Theory (SET) highlights that when empowerment lacks guidance, it may create role ambiguity and conflicts, negatively impacting performance. In contrast, the study supports the mediating role of organizational commitment between organizational culture and employee performance, emphasizing that a supportive culture is key to maximizing empowerment's benefits in Pakistan Railways. Addressing cultural challenges through inclusivity, communication, professional development, and accountability is essential for improving commitment, performance, and overall organizational success.

Implications of the Study

The study confirmed significant relationships between empowerment and employee performance as well as between organizational culture and employee performance within Pakistan Railways, yet found that organizational commitment did not mediate the relation between empowerment and employee performance while it mediates the relationship of organizational culture and employee performance. It represents the first comprehensive attempt to integrate these variables in a single model in the context of Pakistan Railways, focusing on employees from BS-17 to BS-21. Future research could extend this study to various public sector organizations in Pakistan and explore differences in perceptions between the public and private sectors (Noor & Rafiq, 2021). Additionally, broadening the scope to include neighboring countries (Zeffane & Melhem, 2017) could provide deeper insights and a more comprehensive understanding. This study serves as a foundation for improving management strategies within Pakistan Railways and other similar public sector organizations, offering practical guidance to enhance organizational performance and inform policy development.

Limitations of Study and Directions for Future Research

Every research project has its limitations, shaped by its scope and focus, which can make it difficult to capture all aspects of a study. This research identified several limitations. First, it focused exclusively on Pakistan Railways and examined organizational commitment as a mediating variable, without considering other potential constructs like organizational politics or perceived organizational support, which may also influence employee performance. Second, the study did not establish the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between empowerment and employee performance, possibly due to limitations in the measurement scales used. From a

methodological perspective, relying solely on quantitative surveys may have restricted the reliability and depth of the findings. Incorporating qualitative methods could help triangulate the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding. Moreover, the focus on Pakistan Railways limits the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or organizational contexts, particularly beyond similar public sector organizations in Pakistan's transportation sector. While this study offers valuable insights, these limitations highlight the need for future research to explore these gaps, integrate additional constructs, apply mixed-method approaches, and extend the study to other sectors to enhance its robustness and external validity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study was motivated by the need to identify factors affecting employee performance within Pakistan Railways and to uncover reasons behind the sector's underperformance, despite being one of the largest employers in Pakistan among federal departments. Empowerment and organizational play vital role in enhancing employee performance while organizational commitment only mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. Building upon this research, policymakers and management within Pakistan Railways can refine their strategies for optimizing employee performance and organizational effectiveness, ultimately driving positive change and progress within the organization.

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