What role Intangible Rewards Play in Enhancing Organizational Commitment? An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The current study is aimed to explore the role of intangible rewards on organizational commitment. The study is carried out employing a quantitative research design and instrumentation was adapted to collect the feedback from the respondents. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed among the employees of Telecom organizations of Pakistan and the response ratio remained at 79%. The study focused on two critical variables, i.e., Intangible Rewards and Organizational Commitment as independent and dependent respectively. The collected data were analyzed by using software SPSS (20.0) and the results portray that intangible rewards have a positive and inevitable impact on organizational commitment. Furthermore, the implications, recommendations, and limitations for further research have been thoroughly discussed.

Keywords: Intangible Rewards, Organizational Commitment

Introduction

Given the struggle that Telecom organizations face hiring and retaining talent in today's Competitive Telecom market, the question of how to award employees effectively becomes eminent. To find an answer to this question, we reviewed literature that emphasizes the importance of intangible rewards and recognition within the telecom organizations of Pakistan and the larger impact it carries otherwise in general. We after the analysis of the results of our survey and the review of the available literature; concluded that organizations should emphasize the intangible, non-pecuniary recognition initiatives alongside the traditional cash and salary rewards. Furthermore, the need for the introduction and designing of reward programs that satisfy the psychological needs and develop workplace harmony is emphasized in this review. Finally, we discuss the need to conduct more research to understand when and for whom cash and non-cash rewards increase intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and optimal functioning to improve the design and implementation of existing reward programs.

The organizations having the reward system would help the employees to be competent and efficient employees and the reward system increases job satisfaction and in employees (Armstrong, 2013). To motivate the employees to have low performance and to appreciate the high performers, the best method is to provide rewards to employees. As per Shield et al. (2015), rewards should be both monetary and non-monetary so that they can enhance the employees' commitment to the organization, these types' rewards can increase employee performance as well as the productivity of the organization (Khan et al., 2013).

Huczynski and Buchanan (2001) suggests if the organization gives reward to the employees on their high efforts towards the work then the employees' satisfaction and motivation increases. "Job satisfaction is a set of favorable and unfavorable emotions, perceptions and feelings of the employees at the workplace (Acker, 1999). Nguni, Sleegers and Denessen (2006) stated that personal or organizational factors are behind the satisfaction level, which awakes the positive feeling in employees' commitment and loyalty towards the organization. Acker (1999) stated that the employees who are satisfied with their job are more efficient and put more effort as compared to unsatisfied employees.

According to The high commitment in employees would result in high job satisfaction, which also improves their passion for work. Organizational commitment also has an impact on

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organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, and the performance of employees. (Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011). Jaros and Steer (1997) also stated that there is a positive and direct relationship between organizational commitment and satisfaction towards a job. Mowday (1979) stated that organizational commitment increases slowly over time and it's a long process and it is not affected by daily tasks whereas job satisfaction is associated with daily tasks of the organization. Many researchers showed the positive link between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, and the length of the service in the organization (Robbins, 1998; Salami, 2008). There are many studies regarding the relationship of experience with the performance of the employees (Chugtai & Zafar, 2006; Iqbal, 2010).

Deci and Ryan (1985) claimed that the work should be fulfilling then the motivation to work can be natural and that's the intrinsic motivation is all about. The study indicates the reward system, commitment, and the experience on the job satisfaction.

Rewards play an important role in the motivation and commitment level of the current and potential employees. Thus reward programs are inevitable for today's organizations. These programs have a very positive impact on the output of the organizations (Dalvi et al., 2013). There is no doubt that employees are the pillars of an organization's culture and values and progressive organizations focus on the development and retention of their employees by motivational means and reward programs both tangible and intangible to have positive outcomes. For these organizations, the key to success remains in the carefully designed rewards programs. Recognition & reward programs are aimed to recognize the contribution and performance of employees through Tangible and non-tangible manner to motivate them for future performance and keep them committed to the organization. Tangible rewards refer to monetary recognitions like pay increases, bonuses, etc. while intangible rewards are recognition through appreciation, certification, some kind of an award, and even a lunch or dinner with the management. Both kinds of rewards are necessary and play an equal role in the motivation and commitment of employees. Such a program plays a decisive role in the motivation of employees and encourages them to come up with ideas and out-of-the-box thinking and to further contribute towards organizational growth (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007). If a recognition program is well in place; organizational goals can be achieved more efficiently and consistently. On the other side of the equation, employees feel committed and motivated since the management recognizes their efforts and performance (White & Druker, 2013). In modern-day business entities reward programs shape and supplement the goals and objectives of an organization (Armstrong et al 2009). An organization that aspires for gaining more business space and market shares develop their recognition and reward programs in such a way that they would forecast the results and impact of the programs on their employees. They accurately presume the commitment level of their employees (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). The rewards program while effectively in place; enables the management of an organization to forecast their performance, KPI, and results. Thus it enables them to plan, act and monitor accordingly. As per Holarosine et al (2014), the commitment and motivation level of employees is reciprocal to that of the management of the organization and their strategy to get output from the employees. The reward programs that they design and implement show the care and commitment they possess towards their employees and in return they get the motivation and commitment from their HR resulting in the achievement of organizational goals. According to Jiang et al (2009), reward programs even affect the transition, culture, values, and business acumen of the organizations. The recognition program has an impact on the outlook and repute of an organization. Ghorbani and Ladoni (2013) argue that reward programs accelerate the motivation of the employees and they portray the culture and outlook of the organization. These programs indicate that how an organization values its employees. As per Molahosseini et al (2014), organizations tend to design their recognition programs to gain optimum value for the organization. They do it in a manner that not only the employee gets motivated but also they perform to the optimum of their abilities and thus organizations achieve their goals more efficiently. Dalvi and Ebrahimi (2013) argue that recognition and reward programs contribute to the esthetics and motivation level of the employees while performing a task. They in return create out-of-the-box ways to fulfill their assigned tasks with more enthusiasm; their motivation, enthusiasm, and innovation contribute to the transformation of the organization at large. The researchers maintain that a carefully crafted reward program results in a sense of emotional attachment towards the organization amongst the employees. They feel valued by the organization and thus start performing to their maximum abilities and the organization remains the

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ultimate beneficiary. Thus reward programs need to be designed and implemented in a caring way. Jiang et al (2009) emphasize that recognition and reward programs are essential for an organization to perform to the optimum level, such programs keep the employees committed and the organization's benefit out of it. The same emphasis on the reward programs for the motivation and emotional attachment of the employees as researchers believe that recognition in either way affects the commitment level of the employees towards the organization. Ihionkhan and Aigbomian (2014) state that employees are the means through which an organization would achieve its ultimate goals. The emotional attachment and commitment level of the employees determine the success pace and path for an organization without any doubt. It is the sense of affiliation of the employees towards an organization that makes the difference. Danish (2010), argues that both monetary and non-monetary rewards contribute to keeping the employees committed and motivated. The rewards program not only keeps them motivated and committed but also values and encourages them to come up with ideas to achieve the organizational goals more efficiently. As per Dubihlela and Rundora (2014), the saturated markets and increasing competition are keeping the organizations focused on employee retention. Losing skilled and experienced resources would have an adverse effect on the business and the results of an organization. The organizations design reward programs to keep their human resources committed and motivated to gain results for the organizational objectives. The organizations now believe that a well-designed reward program both tangible and intangible is inevitable in today's complex business environment. Ihionkhan and Aigbomian (2014) emphasize that reward programs create an emotional sense of attachment amongst the employees of an organization. It creates harmony and coherence in the organization. Well-implemented reward programs affect the commitment level of the employees towards an organization. They urge the need of exploring more ways and means of recognition programs for employees to keep them motivated and committed.

Organizational commitment is the key focus area in today's evolving and emerging economies. China is a classic example where the emphasis is on the innovation and evolution of the organizations and the human element of the organization while going into the international arena of business focus and management (Casimir et al., 2014). Researchers further suggest that Chinese organizations should focus on employee recognition policies as per international market and business norms. The strategy should evolve around winning the hearts of the employees by implementing well-crafted employee reward programs. Westwood et al., (2004), suggest in particular for the Chinese organization to focus on employee commitment by introducing cross-cultural systems while operating internationally. The employee relations and recognition programs demand a different set of rules that may be contrary to the organization operating inside China (Law et al., 2000). Employee relations and recognition programs are increasingly becoming important even in the Chinese context these days (Vanhonacker, 2004; Wong et al., 2001).

The researchers are more inclined towards the role of recognition and rewards programs in employee retention and their commitment towards each other. They maintain that the reward programs run for public and corporate sectors may vary from each other since the structures and focal area of the public and corporate sector differs. Even their KPI and organizational commitment differ from each other (Dick et al., 2011).

Initially, it was believed that HR management like attendance, KPI's and appraisals play a role in the organizational commitment and the people in an organization creates the job environment. However the modern-day organizations focus on employee commitment through their recognition for their performance in both tangible and intangible means (Meyer et al., 2002). It is clear as daylight that the potency and motivation levels of employees are reciprocal to the recognition programs adopted by the organizations (Miao et al., 2013). Almost all organizations around the globe achieve the commitment and attachment of their employees through well-designed and implemented reward programs (Malhotra et al., 2007). The characteristics of employees in organizations are naturally unique. They naturally and morally intend to contribute towards the organizations as per their personality and professional characteristics and traits. The trick for the management remains that how carefully they recognize and encourage the employee to get optimum performance on their part and to keep them committed and motivated (Mottaz, 1988). It is an obvious equation for both the organization and employees to reciprocate towards each other. If the employees are treated well and cared for through a reward and recognition program; their motivation and commitment level shall increase and the organization shall benefit from it by achieving its goals (Rousseau, 1995).

Organizations win the commitment and loyalty of their employees by recognizing their performance and achievements in both monetary and non-monetary ways (Lambert, 2000). They further argue that a well-established and consistent reward program motivates the employees and wins the loyalty of the employees. In return, the employee feels obliged and committed to performing to the best of their ability thus making it a win-win for both parties. It binds both parties in a strong relationship (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The impact of such reward programs works cross-culturally and is not limited to political boundaries. Though the recognition means and processes may vary from country to country (Williamson et al., 2009). The organizational culture is the outcome of a variety of personality traits of its employees. Personal experience, contribution, and personality traits play a role in shaping the culture of organizations (Aycan, 2000). The personal and professional background of employees plays a decisive role in organizational commitment. Organizations need to adopt recognition programs according to the need and traits of the society they are operating in (Williamson et al., 2009). Researchers emphasized the recognition of cultural traits and their significance towards organizational commitment in China.

Literature Review

Organizational rewards are not limited to monetary incentives only. In today's corporate and even public sector organizations employee recognition is done in many ways i.e. appraisement, public recognition, etc. even the work environment serves as an intangible incentive for the employees and result in their commitment and loyalty towards the organization. The workforce synergy, removal of red-tapism, the office attire, a moderate approach towards the reporting lines, and flow of information and role assignments among the employees play a very positive role in the job satisfaction, motivation and result in enhanced output for the employees and they feel more committed to the organization. With the growth of the Telecom Sector, the companies in the telecom business remained focused on the work and office environment and kept improving their employee relations, work process flows, and even on the dress code relaxations for employees. (Kaplan - Benefits & Compensation Digest, 2005)

Employee recognition through intangible means like public lauding, appreciation letters even a lunch or dinner with the CEO for the creativity and affiliate behavior of the employee towards the assigned task increases the efficiency and motivation level of an employee like anything. An employee feels more committed to the organization. The Telecom companies in Pakistan run a recognition program where they paste a photograph of the employee of the month for his/her performance at the main notice board at the reception of the office. It doesn't carry any monetary value but imagines the motivation and commitment level of such employees. I remained a beneficiary of such recognition and the commitment & motivation level were skyrocketing. In the era leading towards the last decade of the 20th century, Telecom sector offices and employees were as bureaucratic as any other government organization and the employees did routine work without any creativity or out-of-the-box kind of things. Then came companies like Mobilink, Telenor, etc. and they turned around the entire atmosphere of the Telecom sector. Employees were encouraged to come up with creative ideas for improvement at every aspect of the organization and the results are in front of us (Peterson & Luthans, 2006).

Employee retention and keeping them committed towards the organization becomes critical & tricky when options are available for employee switchovers etc. The managers have to be vigilant and creative enough to keep their teams motivated and committed. They need to work on the *soft elements of the rewards* program. The work ethics, environment, recognition, non-monetary awards, and career development are some of the tools of employee retention and to keep them motivated and committed.

We witnessed employee switchovers in the banking sectors of Pakistan at a very high frequency; the Telecom sector remained the second arena for employee switchovers. The reason was the banking sector was preliminarily focused on the monetary benefits of the employees. People used to switchover bank jobs if only a higher salary was offered, they didn't consider the image or career development path of the organization. Similar was the case with the telecom sector with comparatively low intensity. The reason was the HR practices and the tools that were used for employee retention were not focused on monetary values only as compared to banks. Intangible rewards made a huge difference between the two (Amacom, 2007).

The management with good leadership qualities plays a decisive role in the employee's commitment towards the organization. The engagement of management with the employees and their

team-building skills and motivational activities like having a dinner with the star performers or inviting an employee to a town hall (where the CEO interacts with employees in person or virtually through video conferencing) and praising the employee would have a very positive impact on the motivation of employees. In Telecom organizations like Telenor and Motorola, such Town Halls are a common feature. The employees get a chance to speak their mind regarding work, environment, etc. directly to the top man. Sometimes a pat on the shoulders is more effective than monetary means (Stark, et al 2010).

This article again advocates the importance of intangible rewards. It emphasis that equal importance and share should be given to intrinsic rewards if the aim is to keep the employees motivated and committed. The employees should feel psychologically satisfied with their jobs, work environment, and management. They should feel that they have a caring leadership at the top of their organization. We started an employee relationship program at the regional level in PTCL in 2006-07. We started sending a birthday card, a wedding bells card and an obituary letter in case of a close relative demise to our employees and the impact was amazing. The employees when asked for feedback stated they feel like a family and not workers.

The emphasis is again on the intangible rewards with an equal weightage that of the monetary or tangible ones. Both are equally important and sometimes the intangible rewards have a more positive impact than monetary awards. The company president (PTCL) used to call performing employees personally and praise their contribution. Such employees were recognized in a company-wide conference call as well and the performance indicators showed a very healthy response. In the old days, a common employee could have only dreamed of such an opportunity and the results were demotivated employees with unionist activities although the salary and bonus structures were in-placed competitively with the market (Aktar et al., 2012).

In today's competitive market environment retention and keeping the employees committed is quite a tricky job. Perhaps the intangible steps and strategies play a more vital role than the tangible means.

Workplace flexibility and environment, employee recognition programs, manager-employee relationship, a personalized HR department, career development all are examples of intrinsic rewards that bind an employee to an organization. Offices of the telecom sector in Pakistan are a classic example. In companies like Jazz and Telenor; employees enjoy flexible working hours with esthetically designed offices and attire (Anwar et al, 2012).

Organizations are made of employees. They are the backbone and of the organizations. They are the engines that drive the organizations towards the objectives. Their loyalty and commitment towards the organization is the most important factor for the very existence of an organization. Their deviant behavior and dishonesty towards the organization would have a catastrophic impact on the organization. Their loyalties would be won through appreciation, recognition, and a pat on their shoulder. PTCL in Pakistan can be quoted as an example here. The employees were used to the usual government style of running an organization. The organization was politicized, and unions were so strong that they could lock the management in their offices. The loyalties were more towards political motives and exploitation than the organization itself. The management who took over after the privatization had to run a massive change management program for the human capital of the organization (Ramzan, 2013).

Jensen, McMullen, and Stark (2007) argue in their article that intangible rewards are crucial for employee commitment towards the organization. It creates a positive impact on the performance of employees and coworker relationships. The Telecom sector is following the principle religiously. Even the HR department is now called People & Organization, depicting the relationship between the two (Hashim, 2015).

In today's complex social environment, employees desire a dynamic workplace environment. They need to be psychologically more attracted and committed to their organizations. The required mental satisfaction is instigated by intangible rewards and recognition programs. They need their workplaces to be more attractive, more comforting, and more motivating (Baig, 2015).

Salah advocates the importance of intangible rewards along with tangible rewards at the same scale. He argues that the existence of a system for recognizing the employee's creativity and performance inevitable for the organizations. The relationship between the employee and the

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employer should be of passion, care, loyalty, honesty, and commitment towards each other (Salah, 2016).

In today's competitive market environment organizations struggle to win the loyalty and commitment of the employees to retain them. It has become a critical job for the organization to design programs for employee rewards.

Personal development, professional development, employee recognition programs, employee retention initiatives, relationship building with the employees, and workplace environment are the tools transformational leaders use for employee motivation and retention these days. The first name base greetings in organizations are an example of the cordial relationship among the employees at all organizational level (Simo et al., 2018)

Hwang and Jung trace the historical trend of monetary rewards in recognition of the performance of the employees. They recall that how tangible rewards were considered a more effective tool of earning the employee's commitment. The time and experience proved it otherwise. Employees intoxicated with monetary benefits only tend to switchovers for monetary benefits. On the other hand organizations with a moderate culture and work environment retained their employees effectively. Employees feel emotionally attached to organizations, which they feel, care for them (Hwang, S., 2018).

Organizations like Telenor run special programs for stress management, employee relationships, and recreational activities for employees. I remember Telenor used to send its employees Mosquito spray bottles every month to protect them from Dengue fever. It shows the affection of an organization towards its employee; who would then reciprocate the same (Sahni, 2019).

Methodology

The aim and objective of this research are to determine and analyze the impact of intangible rewards on organizational commitment. Involving the employees of the Telecom sector in Pakistan carries out the research.

The target audience of this survey were, support staff, junior executives, middle management, and senior executives of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, PTCL, Jazz, Telenor, Nayatel, Ufone, ZTE, Huawei, and Zong CM Pak.

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed out of which 197 were filled and responded to by the participants. The return ratio remained at 79 %. The Mean, Median, Mode, Frequency and standard deviation were found through descriptive statistics for information normality.

The Mean, Median, mode & Frequency shows the average feedback from the employees, while the standard deviation is used to check the variation within the collected data and information.

Pearson Correlation analysis is used to determine the relationships among the variables. The positive sign in the correlation value represents a healthy relationship, while the negative sign represents the correlation value's negativity. Regression analysis is used to study the change in the dependent variable (Organizational Commitment).

Analyses have been carried out using the software SPSS 20.0. The reliability of the scales is measured by Cronbach's Alpha.

Population:

The target population/Audience were the employees of the Telecom Operators and Regulators in Pakistan. Different Cadres and levels of employees including the support staff, Junior Executives, Middle Management Employees, and senior executives were approached to fill in the questionnaires.

Sampling Technique:

Several factors have a positive and adverse effect on organizational commitment. A Reward program is a very common phenomenon amongst organizations that is implied to retain and recognize employees. Both monetary (Tangible) and Non-Monetary (Intangible) rewards have an impact on organizational commitment.

We have considered different available literature on the subject matter to develop the questionnaire. The questionnaire in hand is developed after a thorough study and consideration of questionnaires available on the subject.

A Likert Scale Instrument of Five Points ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree is used. The questionnaire is carefully crafted with negative/reverse-coded questions so that respondents would answer carefully. We used a job satisfaction survey and Organizational Commitment

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Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure the satisfaction level of employees. The JSS & OCQ contains ---- items with ---- subscales to measure the employee satisfaction and commitment level towards the organization in response to the intangible rewards offered by the respective organizations.

Data Screening:

Data screening of the collected questionnaires is done through Cronbach's coefficient alpha. SPSS 20.0 is used to calculate the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of each variable.

Results

The results are given below which were run through SPSS. The results show the demographic, reliability, correlational, and regression test was conducted.

Response Rate

Participants were given 5 minutes to fill in the survey anonymously, and 70 entry-level staff but only 14 people filled the survey, 80 junior-level out of which 23 responded, 100 middle staff members sent, out of which 84 people responded and 80 middle staff members of organizations were sent out of which only 44 responded. How many were sent and how many responded percentage given in above table 1.

Demographic Data

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	124	75.2
Female	41	24.8
Age group(in years)		
20-30	31	18.8
31-40	105	63.6
41-50	27	16.4
Above 50	2	1.2
Department		
HR	27	16.4
Technical	51	30.9
Support	24	14.5
Call center service	9	5.5
Marketing & sale	33	20

Participants	Sent	Percentage	Respondent	Percentage
Entry-level	70	21.22%	14	8.5%
Junior level	80	24.24%	23	13.9%
Middle staff	100	24.24%	84	50.9%
Senior management level	80	30.4%	44	26.7%
Total Respondent	330	100%	168	90.9%

Finance & accounts	21		12.7	
No. of employees				
0-50	33		20	
51-100	28		17	
101-150	12		6.7	
151-200	15		9.1	
201-250	8		5.4	
Above 251	69		41.8	

In table 2, the demographics of the data as mentioned below.

In this data, 75% of the respondents were male and 25% were female. 18%% were in the age group of 20-30, 63% in the age group of 31-40 years, 16% are in the age group of 41-50 years, and 1% in the age group of above 50 years. It is interpreted that 16% of the respondents were from the HR department, 30% of the respondents were from technical, 14% of the respondents were from support department, call Centre department had 16%, 20% of the respondents were from the marketing department and 12% of the respondents were from finance and account department. Further, it is also inferred that no. of employees lied differently.

Reliability

Reliability is used to measure the stability of data. The value must be greater than .70. If the value is greater than .70, it is acceptable, if the value is greater than .80 then it is good, and if the data is greater than .90, this means that the value is excellent.

Variable	N of item	Cronbach's Alpha
Reward	11	.86
Organizational commitment	9	.84

The reward instrument had 11 items and its Cronbach's Alpha (α) value is .86. The organizational commitment had 9 items and the is .84 which means the data collected was consistent.

Correlation

The value should be between -1 to 1. The Pearson correlation was used to test the relation of variables the table below shows the correlation value.

Variables	I	II
I-Rewards	-	.737
II-Organizational Commitment	.737	-

The results show that there is a positive strong relation among variables. Rewards can have a strong positive effect on organizational commitment. (r=.737, p<.05)

Regression

Regression is the determination of a statistical relationship between two or more variables. In simple regression two variables are used, One variable (independent) is the Impact/cause of the behavior of another one (dependent).

Model	R	R Square	Change Statistics	
			R Square Change	Sig. F Change
1	.737[a]	.543	.543	.00

The results show a significant relationship between reward and organizational commitment, R^2 = .543, p<0.05. This means that when rewards are offered in an organization, the employees will show more commitment to the organization.

Discussion

The variables show a strong relationship between them. If the organization gives rewards to their employees, then they will show more commitment towards the organization. In any organization, reward programs play a decisive role in winning the commitment and loyalty of the employees that further result in optimum performance.

Conclusion

The theme of this literature review is to analyze and explore the impotence of Intangible rewards and their impact on organizational commitment with a specific reference to the telecom organizations of Pakistan. The results of this literature review supported the inevitable role of intangible rewards in organizational commitment. The literature under review proved the significance of intangible rewards and their correlation with employee retention in the organization of multiple sectors. As per the literature under review employees in almost every organization wish to be recognized in ways other than monetary means. They tend to be motivated by extracurricular activities, get-together, family time, etc. The intangible rewards ensure the employees that the organization cares for them like a family member. A birthday card, a round of applause, a call from the CEO for condolence has more impact on an employee and he/she feels connected to the organization and coworkers and results in a stronger bond and commitment on part of the employee towards the organization.

It is suggested to conduct a deeper study on the subject matter for a better understanding and the practical implementation of the intangible means for organizational commitment involving both public and private sector organizations.

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