Organizational Learning Culture and Employees' Career Development: Empirical Evidence from Colleges of Malakand Division of Pakistan

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Abstract

Current knowledge is critical for the survival of any organization. Employees bring this asset along with their career development. This career development can only be ensured if organization has a learning culture. This has become a truism for all sorts of organizations. This study aims at validating it through empirical evidences from college sector teaching staff of Malakand Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The extant literature has been explored to provide strong theoretical base supposed to be tested for validation. The study used 395 responses collected from 75 colleges in the subject area with a 2,200 (approximate) population for analysis. The researcher has employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for evaluation of the model of the study using Analysis of Movement Structure (AMOS). The results of the study validate the existing theoretical base of direct positive association between the variables with different degrees of intensity. All the four hypotheses have been supported by the empirical data. These results have academic as well practical implications for the policy makers.

Keywords: Organizational learning culture, Career planning, Career management, Career development, Structure equation modeling, Analysis of movement structure

Introduction

The survival of any organization in today's global world depends on its capability of knowing how to manage uncertainty through knowledge (Kandemir & Hult, 2005; Skerlavaj, Song, & Lee, 2010). And in organization this knowledge resides in its employees. That is why the critical nature of employees' workplace behaviour has widely been

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acclaimed (Guest, 2001; Guest, Michie, Conway, & Sheehan, 2003; Hung & Wong, 2007; King, 2004; Kinicki, Kreitner, Cole, & Dawn, 2006; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Malik, Nawab, & Danish, 2010; Maurer & Lippstreu, 2008; Peiperl & Arthur, 2002). These, and a lot many more studies, underscore the centrality of organizational learning culture in affecting employees' behaviour. An organization is the reflection of its employees (Rahman, 2012; Werner & DeSimone, 2006). This necessitates the development of new behaviours and processes that make them more effective and efficient (Senge, 2006). The concept of empowering human capital for creativity and innovation by planning the careers of employees using HRM policies and practices to develop their skills and competencies with the ultimate aim to provide a range of innovative products and services is gaining currency and are "considered to be the most important to improving their performance in periods of rapid change... and to this end, most modern organizations are presently engaged in a myriad of organizational change efforts aimed at improving performance" (Longenecker & Fink, 2001, p. 7). Technological inroads have necessitated changes like global competitions, mergers, acquisitions, downsizing, customers' demands etc. (Ababneh, 2013). "These changes at the organizational level have elevated the importance of managing people at work, and in particular, the planning and managing of their careers" (Patrick & Kumar, 2011, p. 24).

"With the current expansion of the global economy and the fast-changing evolution of technology and innovation, organizations are facing an ongoing need for employee learning and development" (Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004, p. 279). This requires the breakage of the old habits and developing new behaviours and processes. Therefore, the importance of effective human resource management practices has empirically been recognized. A number of researchers (Gould-Williams, 2003; Guest, et al., 2003; Longenecker & Fink, 2001; Senge, 2006; Shahzad, Bashir, & Ramay, 2008; Sullivan, 1999; Swanson & Holton, 2001; Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003) have found that HR practices positively affect employees as well as organizational performance. However, most of these studies have been carried out in developed countries. Till the end of the 20th century Pakistan was considered as "under-researched country in the discipline of HR management practices" (Aycan et al., 2000, p. 217). Similarly, Shahzad, et al. (2008) believe that the amount of research to test the human resource-performance association with employee behaviour in developing countries like Pakistan is very scarce. In the light of the extant literature, this study attempts to validate the previous researches through empirical evidence from teaching staff of colleges in Malakand Division. Though it can be said that reformations are underway, they could only be made effective and targeted if directed and guided by some

sound research. Surprisingly, the amount of research available in this regard is equal to naught. Therefore, there is a dire need of knowing understanding the views of those who are being affected by the absence or presence of such opportunities.

Literature Review
"For organizations wishing to remain relevant and thrive, learning better and faster is critically important" (Serrat, 2008, p. 2). According to researchers (Hurley, 2002; Hurley & Hult, 1998) organizational learning culture helps organizations to affect the behavior of employees. Researchers (e.g., Joseph & Dai, 2009) are of the opinion that organizational culture that has characteristics like group cooperation, trust, open communication, employee involvement, constructive participation and empowerment are conducive to organizational performance. "Similarly, the literature supports that employees and systems can mutually benefit from the career development process, reinforcing its relevance as a human resource development function" (McDonald & Hite, 2005, p. 421). It is, therefore, expected that if organizations involve employees in career development activities, this will increase their level of commitment, and satisfaction that encourage performance improvement, stay in organization, accomplishing organizational objectives efficiently (Ababneh, 2013).

In the light of the changing perspectives on career, the role of organization has been intensified in the sense that traditional organizations are required to change their behavior to organizational learning culture. Employee career planning and career management are the two approaches that lead to employee career development. And an organization that facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself, remains competitive in the business environment. In such organizations the role of supportive supervisors is of much importance as this has a strong impact on career development (Van der Sluis & Poell, 2003).

Organizational Learning Culture (OLC)
The concept of organizational learning has been in business literature from more than forty years (Wang & Huang, 2013). However, it got popularity in the 1990s and has widely been defined and discussed in the extant literature since then (Bapuji & Crossan, 2004; Crossan & Guatto, 1996; Senge, 2006). The base of the concept has expanded in all the three dimensions: conceptual, theoretical and empirical (Lipshitz, Popper, & Friedman, 2002; Wang & Huang, 2013). There could be many factors behind this expansion which, among others, include technological advances, inroads of globalization and fast pace of the growth of

multinational companies (MNCs) in the 1990s (Chiva & Alegre, 2005; Dodgson, 1993; Wang & Huang, 2013).

Career Planning (CP)
Business has become globalized wherein changes have become the permanent feature on daily basis. These changes include downsizing, restructuring, acquisitions and mergers, and technological advancement, to cope with the fast changing business world (Appelbaum, Ayre, & Shapiro, 2002; Baruch, 2004; Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2009). These ever changing demands have elevated the importance of people's management, particularly the planning and management of their careers (Baruch, 2004) which warrant both organizations and individuals to devise proper planning and strategies to cope with uncertainties that surround these changes. At the same time the unprecedented speed and growth of knowledge, exceptional increase in training and development programs and the pervasive increase in job opportunities are some of the challenges that have to be coped with. It is believed that investment in proper career management and career planning culminate in career development (Adekola, 2011).

Career Management (CM)
A lifelong process of career planning involves setting and choosing one's career goals, and devising strategies to achieve them. This process helps employees in making them aware of their values, interests, strengths, weaknesses, let them aware of the opportunities, identify career goals, and establish action plans to achieve these goals. So in this ongoing process either an employee alone, or in concert with the organization's career system; prepares, implement and monitor career plans and strategies (Greenhaus, et al., 2009). This process involves "career exploration, development of career goals, and use of career strategies to obtain career goals" (Patrick & Kumar, 2011, p. 25). According to Lazarova and Taylor (2009) some employees develop their careers within the boundaries of the organizations and their careers development are affected by the existing career management systems, while some others decide to develop their careers in multiple organizations. "Hence, career management requires initiative from both organizations as well as individuals in order to provide maximum benefit for both" (Patrick & Kumar, 2011, p. 24).

Career Development (CD)
"Career development is a field that is becoming increasingly relevant for both employees and employers" (Kuijpers, Schyns, & Scheerens, 2006). The definitions of career-development vary because of the focus: individual or organizational (McDonald & Hite, 2005). For McDaniels

and Gysbers(1992) it is the totality of sociological, psychological, educational, economic, physical, and also chance factors which shape an individual's career. Career development does not mean linear hierarchical progression that brings more responsibilities, additional financial rewards, etc.

> 'It is about helping employees to become change resilient, more secure in them and their future as the organization adjusts to changing market situations. It is about increasing employability that broadens the range of potential job roles open to the individual and extends the value of their staying with this employer' (Patrick & Kumar, 2011, p. 25).

Adekola (2011) contends that investment in proper career management and career planning enables individual employees to reap the fruits of such investment in the shape of career development. Career planning and career development are very closely related concepts and reflect an organization's effectiveness.

Research Hypotheses

The current study will be testing the following hypotheses through empirical data collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire:

i). Organizational learning culture has positive relationship with employees' perceptions of career planning.

ii). Organizational learning culture has positive relationship with employees' perceptions of career management.

iii). Career planning is positively correlated with employees' perceptions of career development.

iv). Career management is positively correlated with employees' perceptions of career development.

v). OLC positively affects career development through career management and career planning.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Research
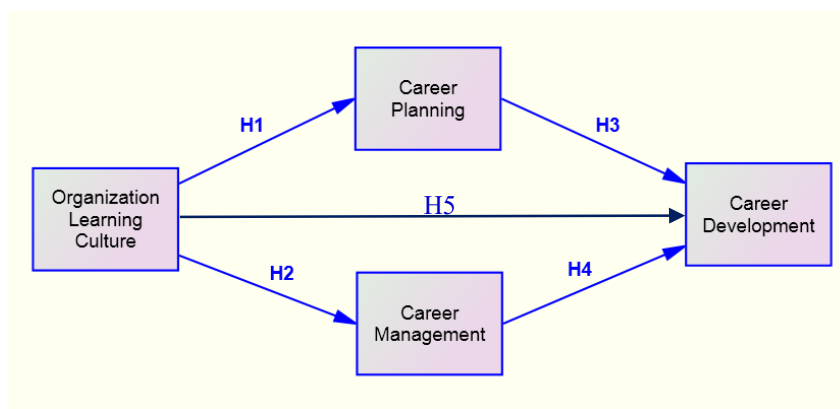
Methodology

The current study is a relational quantitative study designed to investigate and validate the possible relationship between organizational learning culture and employees' career development with the mediating role of employees' career planning and career management. Teaching staff of all the colleges of Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa makes the population of the current study. Total teaching staffs, the population, in all these colleges are nearly 2200. Stratified random sampling technique has been employed with 395 respondents as sample for the study. The researcher has used four scales to measure the constructs of interest. These are: organizational learning culture, career planning, career management, and career development. Measures of demographic information include college's name, age, gender and designation. All statistical tests were two-tailed and *p*-values less than .05 were considered significant. For descriptive statistics, like mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients, SPSS has been employed. While for inferential statistics, SEM was employed through Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS). Five fit indices i.e., CFI, GFI, CMIN/DF, RMR and RMSEA were employed to measure the fitness of the measurement and structural models. A 5-point Likert response scales ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree was employed for all the variables of interest.

Measures

- Organizational learning culture: This variable was measured with a single factor model having 10 indicators. The items were adapted   from http://www.hfi.com/images/ocq_sample_reportshortver   pdf. Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the construct is 0.816. Measurement model for this construct was analyzed using measurement estimation. The initial model did not fit well in the light of the 05 fit indices due to the high correlation of OLC-3 and OLC-7 with other indicators. Therefore, these indicators were dropped to achieve model fit. Finally, the construct has been left with 8 indicators.
- Career Planning: This construct was measured using 11-item scale. The items used to tap this variable were taken from King (1999), Gould (1979) and Coachline's career development needs survey (available at: http://www.orghealth.com/cdn). Cronbach's alpha for the construct is 0.857. Measurement model for this construct was analyzed using measurement estimation. The initial model did not fit well in the light of the 05 fit indices due to the high correlation of CP-2, CP-3, CP-4 and CP-8 with other

indicators. Therefore, these indicators were dropped to achieve model fit. Finally, the construct has been left with 7 indicators.

- Career Management: This variable was measured using 6-item scale. These items were adapted from Chen (Chen, Chang, & Yeh, 2004), and Lee (Lee & Bruvold, 2003).Cronbach's alpha for the construct is 0.874. The initial model did not fit well in the light of the 05 fit indices due to the high correlation of CM-1 and CM-3. Therefore, these indicators were dropped to achieve model fit. Finally, the construct has been left with 4 indicators.

- Career Development: The quality of career development was measured using 5-item scale. The items were adapting from Coachline's career development needs survey (available at: http://www. orghealth.com/cdn). Cronbach's alpha for the construct is 0.776. The initial model fit well in the light of the 05 fit indices. Therefore, all the 5 indicators were retained for the structural model.

- Structural Model: After analyzing measurement models for the individual construct separately, structural model was estimated. Confirmatory factor analysis was run on the model to see if the values for different goodness-of-fit indices are within the acceptable level. These values indicated the acceptance of the model. Different values for these indices were: chi-square value of 610.109 with 245 degrees of freedom was statistically significant at p=0.000; CFI = 0.901; RMSEA = 0.062; GFI = 0.884; Standardized RMR = 0.052; and CMIN/DF = 2.490. These results are sufficient evidences of reliability for constructs of the model in the confirmatory factor analysis. CFA path models for measurement and structural models have been provided in Fig. 1. and Fig. 2. respectively. Similarly, correlation and path coefficient for these models are provided in TABLE-I and TABLE-II respectively.
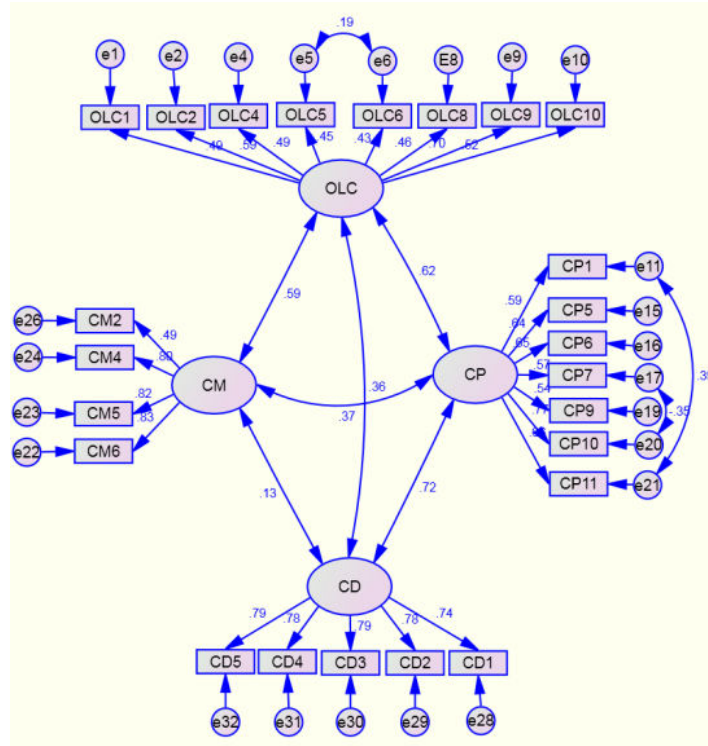
Figure 3: Measurement Model
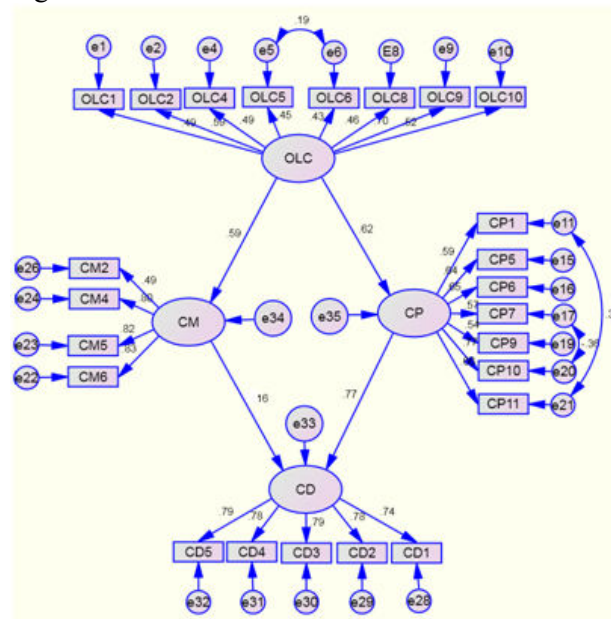

Figure 3: Structural Model

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of the Study (N = 395)

Variables	1	2	3	4
Organizational Learning Culture	--			
Career Planning	0.62	--		
Career Management	0.59	0.37	--	
Career Development	0.36	0.72	0.13	--

Table 2: Path Coefficients among the Constructs

Variable		Coefficients
Organizational Learning Culture ⟶ Career Planning		0. 62
Organizational Learning Culture ⟶ Career Management		0. 59
Career Planning ⟶ Career Development		0.77
Career Management ⟶ Career Development		0.16

Discussions on the Research Findings
Keeping in view the volatile nature of survival in the global market, the critical nature of employees' workplace behaviour has got currency and acceptability (Guest, 2001; Guest, et al., 2003; Hung & Wong, 2007; Z. King, 2004; Kinicki, et al., 2006; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Malik, et al., 2010; Maurer & Lippstreu, 2008; Peiperl & Arthur, 2002). There are sufficient proofs for underscoring the value of organizational learning culture in affecting employees' behaviour. That is why the development of new behaviours and processes that make the employees more effective and efficient (Senge, 2006) has become a major concern for academicians and practitioners. In this regard concern for employees' career through HRM policies and practices is gaining currency (Longenecker & Fink, 2001). The trends towards these values and concerns still continues and the changes at the organizational level for planning and managing of employees' careers still occupy the central position in managing workforce behaviour (Patrick & Kumar, 2011).

The extant literature is replete with the positive relationship between OLC and CP (Appelbaum, et al., 2002; Baruch, 2004; Martin, Romero, Valle, & Dolan, 2001). Through this relationship organizations are seen as facilitators in putting into practice all the career development initiatives. On estimation of the current model the path coefficient value for this relationship is 0.59 which validates the existence of positive relationship and hence the first hypothesis is supported by the empirical data.

Career management is a part of organizational learning culture as it represents organizational perspective in the career development

process (Morrison & Hock, 1986). It is through career management wherein an individual in concert with the organization prepares, implement and monitor career plans and strategies (Greenhaus, et al., 2009) to provide maximum benefit for both (Adekola, 2011; Patrick & Kumar, 2011). On estimation of the current model the path coefficient value for this relationship is 0.62 which validates the existence of positive relationship and hence the second hypothesis is also supported by the empirical data.

Career planning and career management have been found the two main antecedents of career development (Ababneh, 2013; Patrick & Kumar, 2011; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Hall (1986) believe that the integration of these two activities culminates in career development. On estimation of the current model the path coefficient value for the relationship between career planning and development is 0.77 which validates the existence of positive relationship and hence the third hypothesis is also supported by the empirical data.

Similarly, literature on the relationship between career management and career development supports the existence of positivity (Adekola, 2011; Chen, et al., 2004; Post, Borgen, Amundson, & Washburn, 2002). It is believed that career management practices provide the required support for the development of knowledge, skills, and behaviours essential for the success of the individuals. On estimation of the current model the path coefficient value for the relationship between career management and development is 0.16 which validates the existence of positive, though week, relationship and hence the fourth hypothesis is weekly supported by the empirical data.

Hypothesis-5(H5) regarding the mediation was tested through a process of comparison between the model that had the mediating effect with the one that did not have. The two models were compared with one another through a chi-square difference test. The chi-square for the former model was 610.109 with 245 degrees of freedom (RMSEA=.062; Standardized RMR=.052; GFI=.884; CFI=.901), while the chi-square values for the latter model was 665.187 with 243 degrees of freedom (RMSEA=.069; Standardized RMR=.123; GFI=.812; CFI=.838). The difference in chi-square between the two models was 55.078 with 2 degree of freedom. This was a significant change. On the basis of this significant difference between the two models, it can be concluded that the model that includes the mediating effects is better than the model that does not include the mediating effect. On the basis of this comparison it can be said that career planning and career management mediates the relationship between OLC and CD. The hypothesis is supported.

Conclusion

While working in any organization it is natural that employees learn and with the passage of time get experienced. However, the concept of organizational learning culture cannot be translated in that way. To grow and protect the investment made in staff members, a learning organization pays careful attention to developing and retaining its people. It is commonly believed that learning organizations are supposed to provide diverse opportunities for individual learning and development. And the goal behind these opportunities is to ensure that individuals and teams competencies are developed. Empirical evidence of the current study has supported the previous research and further validated these relationships. This means that though in our public sector as well as private sector teaching colleges there do exists some rudimentary sort of learning and career management and development opportunities, they cannot be termed adequate to serve the purpose of modern organizational learning culture trends. Therefore, more attention is required in this regard.

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