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Engaging Police Workforce through Leadership: Explanatory Role of Four-Dimensional Commitment

Abstract

Organizational commitment is the least studied variable among police workforce. While majority of studies on commitment used Meyer and Allen's (1997) three-dimensional model, this study used Gillet and Vandenberghe's (2014) four-dimensional model. Data from 327 police workforce were collected using questionnaire-based survey. The study applied structural equation modeling and noted affective, normative and perceived sacrifices commitment as partial mediators between transformational leadership, leader-member exchange and work engagement. Whereas, few alternative commitment was found to fully mediate the same association. This study is first of its kind to examine the mediating role of four-dimensional organizational commitment between leadership and work engagement.

Keywords: Affective, few alternatives, normative and perceived sacrifice commitment; employee engagement; leader-member exchange; transformational leadership

Introduction

In today's world, policing has become a stressful occupation as they are to take quick decisions while dealing various persons and situations simultaneously (Ahmad, Islam, & Saleem, 2019). Such situations (e.g. illness, accident, death, and crime) not only demand interpersonal interactions but also require the police to control their feelings and expressions. According to Dick (2011), controlling feelings and expressions becomes difficult for the police with a heavy workload. Few studies have highlighted the same about police in developed countries like: Australia, New Zealand and UK, (Hoque, Arends, & Alexander, 2004). Sometimes, such situations result in swear consequences for the public.

The public is not totally unaware of the stress police faces every day. Police work involves protecting and safeguarding public through patrolling techniques, and they are responsible for law and order enforcement. Their job description requires

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24-hours availability, working long hours and torment by stress. Such job description not only disturbs their personal life but also disturbs their family life (Malach-Pines & Keinan, 2007). Additionally, police are expected to behave and respond as per the community's expectations, thereby mostly remained in spotlight (Dick, 2011). Wright, Powell, and Ridge (2006) indicated policing is a form of emotional labor where efforts are involved to protect the community, but is restrained by fiscal constraints and behaves in a 'client-focused' manner. This negatively impact on police workforce work-related outcomes and work engagement (WE from here to onward).

According to Islam and Tariq (2018), studying workers engagement in the service sector has become essential as "only 13% of the world's employees are enthusiastically engaged in their work" (p. 258). In addition, WE is not only related to employees' performance but also related to the customers' satisfaction (public in this study) (Islam, Ahmad, Ahmed, & Ahmer, 2019). Therefore, it should be the priority of the government and policymakers (here Police) to provide them with such a work environment that enhances not only their engagement but also their level of commitment. The literature is clear about the association between WE and overall organizational commitment (van Gelderen & Bik, 2016). However, hardly any study has examined association between WE and four-dimensional commitment (i.e. perceived sacrifices, few alternatives, normative and affective commitment).

Earlier, organizational commitment was considered a three-dimensional construct but Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014) study opened the debate by dividing commitment into four-dimensions. Affective commitment (AC) is the employees' emotional attachment, while normative commitment (NC) is their obligatory authority to be with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Perceived sacrifice (PS) "is associated with the cost of leaving the organization, and few alternatives committeemen (FAC) deals with few job opportunities" (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014). Our study is an attempt to examine the explanatory role of this four-dimensional commitment model between leadership and police workforce work engagement.

Organizational commitment is least studied variable with regards to the police force (Ahmad et al., 2019). Policing is a unique public service and demands high dedication. Police workforce needs to have high emotional intelligence as they deal with accidents, victims of crimes, death and illness in daily routine (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), thereby there is a professional call for their commitment and engagement. Thus, increasing interest in enhancing commitment has contributed in many leadership theories. Most of these theories are leader-centric rather follower-centric. However, transformational leadership (TL) and leader-member exchange (LMX) are follower-centric theories. Past studies have suggested leadership as a strong predictor of WE and organizational commitment (Xu & Thomas, 2011). Similarly, Kahn (1990) also concluded about a strong linkage between individual's psychology and leadership. LMX refers to the social exchange relations between the worker and their leader and workers having high-quality exchange relationships comes up with high commitment and increased engagement.

Police officers work harder and are expected to perform more with less resources. Police officers experience greater accountability due to higher public scrutiny for their actions and strong managerial imperative to ensure professional conduct. According to Pakistan Police Statistics (2017), Punjab police is facing a huge number of cases and crimes. More specifically, a total of 405895 cases (including murder, kidnapping and robberies etc.) were registered with the Punjab police in 2017, from which 29,743 cases are still pending, whereas 21,145 cases were not treated by the police (Islam et al., 2019). Thus, there is a need of more committed and engaged police workforce. These issues generate the need to study police workforce engagement and organizational commitment. Therefore, this study contributed in existing literature by examining the impact of transformational leaders (TL) and LMX on the level of police workforce engagement with the explanatory role of four-dimensions of commitment.

Literature Review

In transformational leadership (TL), leaders are allied and engaged with their subordinates. Such leaders engage their subordinates, increase their capacity and enhance their level of commitment to accomplish organizational goals. Moreover, such leaders focus on organizational structure and develop strategies to seek positive transformation in their followers (Peter & James, 2013). Avolio and Bass (2004) opine that TL has four characteristics namely, individualized consideration, charismatic influence, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Leader support is a concept that is related to TL, therefore, this list of characteristics was expanded by Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000) who suggested, "...Communicates a vision, develops staff, provides support, empowers staff, is innovative, leads by example, and is charismatic" (p. 390) as the characteristics of such leaders. Further, they develop a seven-item Global Transformational leadership (GTL) scale to measure such characteristics of TL. Adding to the literature, Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, and Kramer (2004) argued about tasks and relations-support as two more characteristics of TL. Leader's task-support includes ensuring the adequacy of resources as these are essentials for the execution of the job, while relations-support includes leader's concern with the socio-emotional need of their subordinates.

Employee engagement motivates individuals physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Employees' WE has become a major issue for the organizations since they have realized employee as their main asset (Seijts & Crim, 2006). Leaders can make their subordinates engaged in their work if when they learn, try to solve the difficulties faced by the subordinates. According to social exchange theory, there must be a series of interactions between parties (i.e. leader and subordinate) to get work smooth. Following the rule of exchange, this association not only enhance their level of trust but also loyalty and commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Such exchange interactions develop a sense of obligation among subordinates, in turn; they feel their duty to respond to the organization by achieving its goals (Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2014). Thus, TL understands the need of their subordinates by interacting with them and encourages them to work for their organization, thereby enhancing their WE. Therefore, we suggest that:

H1: TL is positively associated with police work engagement

LMX is the quality of exchange relationship between leader and his/her subordinates that includes an examination of the distich association, communication and acuties about the working relationships. LMX theory is unique in its focus on the couplet relationship between the leader and his subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and states that leaders have varying relationships with their subordinates. In Low-LMX relationships, the followers only perform what is expected from them to do and paid accordingly or what is laid down in the employment contract. In such relations, subordinates make their calculations, whereas, high-LMX associations are based on mutual obligations, respect and trust which leads individuals towards emotional attachment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is the quality of relationship because of which leaders thought about subordinates' involvement in decision-making, job autonomy and workload.

Employee WE has become essential for the todays managers. Kahn (1990, p. 694) first conceptualized employee engagement and defined it as "harnessing the organization's members sleeves to their work role is employee engagement". Andrew and Sofian (2012) is of the view that, an individual's level of commitment and involvement in his/her organizational values is WE. From this argument, it can be inferred that WE is a two way process where leaders need to define organizational values and subordinates needs to follow the same. Graen and Scandura (1987) also commented that LMX theory also postulates that when the exchange relationships are of high quality, then the follower feel obligations for the organization and in turn, he/she show more work engagement. Therefore, this study argues that in the presence of high-quality exchange relation, leaders and followers trust each other and leaders help them to perform better, thus they get engaged in their work.

H2: LMX is positively associated with police work engagement

Theoretical Framework

Meyer and Allen (1997) presented commitment as a three-dimensional model comprising of affective (want to), continuous (need to) and normative (ought to) commitment. Affective Commitment (AC) is "the employees' emotional attachment to their organization", Normative Commitment (NC) is "the employees' obligation to be with their organization", and Continuous Commitment (CC) is "associated with costs of leaving the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Criticizing this model, McGee and Ford (1987) introduced two distinguishable dimensions of CC i.e. Few Alternatives Commitment (FAC) and Perceived Sacrifices Commitment (PSC). FAC is defined as "the role of available alternatives in decision making to remain on one's job" and PSC refers to "the sacrifices that an employee has to make if he/she leaves his/her organization". Despite clear difference, PSC and FAC remained neglecting variables in the field of organizational behavior. Literature is rich about the positive association between TL and employees' commitment. Specifically, it is identified that TL is positively related to AC and NC. However, its association with CC is of mixed results as some studies reported a positive association, while others have reported a negative association e.g. (Felfe, Yan, & Six, 2008). One of the reasons of these mixed results might be, because CC is not studied as extensively as PSC and FAC.

According to Gillet and Vandenberghe (2014), TL provide training, coaching and develop skills of their workforce that in return increases their PSC and reduce their perception about getting another job in the labor market (i.e. FAC). Transformational leaders transform the values, behavior and attitude of their subordinates by trusting them; thereby increase their commitment to work and organization (Price, 1997). Stephan, Vahdat, Walkinshaw, & Walsh (2014) surveyed 2500 organizations in 90 countries and observed that WE has become the greatest challenge for today's organizations. Islam and Tariq (2018) identified that only 13% of the world's employee are engaged and 63% employees are not putting their discretionary efforts. They also commented that if a country is rich in resources, it does not mean that its workforce is engaged. Today, many employers fail to get their workforce engaged in their work because they do not understand the importance of organizational commitment (PSUWC, 2015). Such issues generate the need to study organizational commitment. Thus, based on above discussion this study postulates that TL enhances their subordinate's commitment which ultimately enhances their work engagement.

H3a: *TL is positively associated with AC, NC, PSC, and FAC*

H3b: *AC, NC, PSC and FAC mediate the relationship between TL and employee work engagement*

As discussed earlier, LMX is a two-way relationship between leader and followers and leaders develop a different type of exchange relationships with each of its subordinate in the same organization (Gerstner & Day, 1997). From extant studies, it can be summarized that one of the strong predictors of engagement and commitment is Leadership. Predominantly to LMX, it is observed that when the workforce gets resources from his leader he/she commits him/herself to the advanced level of contribution (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). LMX positively impacts on subordinates' level of commitment in several ways. First, in the presence of high-LMX, leaders can easily persuade their subordinates to care for their organization (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). Second, a main element of social exchange theory and LMX theory is reciprocity, as when the member experiences high exchange relationships he/she tries to reciprocate (get committed) and makes efforts to make equal exchange relationships (Gouldner, 1960).

Additionally, leaders serve as performance driving agents for their organizations when they provide their followers with suitable resources at the same time while ensuring to assign productive and challenging work, effective feedback and social communication opportunities which in turn also positively affect employees' level of commitment (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). It is stated in LMX theory that leaders build the competencies of the followers, provide them training, offer more autonomy and increased participation in decision making process to the in-group members that in turn enhance their capabilities and reduce their uncertainties regarding getting a job in the labor market that increases their AC, NC and PSC and reduces their FAC (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014).

Specific to the public service sector, leaders need to understand the engagement of their employees as it is the most critical factor in the success of the organization and in the achievement of goals (Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014). Employees may win their organization a competitive edge through commitment because they are the

real asset of their organization (MacLeod & Clarke, 2011). Thereby, there is a need to get them engaged in the workplace. As explained earlier, LMX has a direct effect on employees' level of commitment and engagement and the quality of the couplet relationship will decide the level of engagement (Rousseau, 1989). Social exchange theory explains that when workforce gets resources, they get committed and engaged in their organization (Saks, 2006). Lockwood (2007) identified that for a leader, engaged employees are an edge over the other organizations and if the employees are engaged correctly, they are the only asset that cannot be duplicated by others. Based on the literature it is hypothesized that:

H4a: *LMX is positively associated with AC, NC, PSC and FAC*

H4b *AC, NC, PSC and FAC mediate the relationship between LMX and employee work engagement*

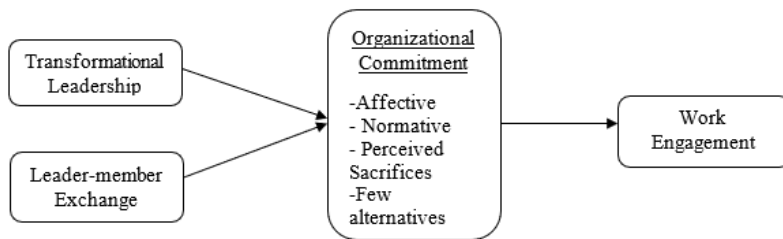


Figure 1: Research Model

Methods

Participants and data collection

This study collected data from Pakistani police workforce. According to Pakistan Police statistics, Pakistan police have to face big number of crime cases on daily basis and the occurrence of crime is increasing, there is an acute need to get the Police force committed and engaged in their work. As list of Pakistani police workforce was not available, Item Response Theory was applied to select the sample of 700 (by multiplying number of questions with 20). In this way, 700 police employees from province Punjab were approached personally on the basis of convenience sampling. Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan where individuals from all cities are placed, thus can represent entire Pakistan. We received 337 questionnaires back, from which 327 were used in final analysis. On the basis of personal traits, most of the police employees were male (because females are socially discouraged to serve police in Pakistan), aged between 21-30 years.

Measures

We used adapted scales and respondents were evaluated on “a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree”. A shortened 9-item scale of Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) was used to measure police employees' WE. Karatepe and Karadas (2016) used the same scale in service sector and found

it reliable. However, our study found two items with low load, therefore were deleted and the reliability of remaining 7-item was noted as 0.89 which is above the standard value of 0.70 (see Table-1). TL was measured using a 7-item Global TL scale of Carless et al. (2000). Our study found the scale reliable with Cronbach Alpha value as 0.79. Scandura and Graen (1984) 7-item scale regarding LMX was used in this study and noted its reliability as 0.83. According to Meyer and Allen (1997) OC is a three-component model but researchers identified that there are two sub-dimensions in CC namely FAC and PSC. In this study, explanatory role of four-dimensions of commitment is measured. A shortened 12-item scale of Meyer and Allen (1991) is used in this study. The study noted 0.81, 0.86, 0.85 & 0.77 as the reliability of these dimensions respectively.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

First, we examined data for missing values, multicollinearity, outliers and normality following the pre-assumptions of using structural equation modeling (SEM). Questionnaire used in this study were adapted from previous studies, therefore were only examined for CFA. We followed the model fit indices of Williams, Martins, Consalvo, and Ivory (2009), i.e. RMSEA, CFI, SRMR & χ^2/df with the loading estimates and average variance extracted value of above 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Initially, the values of model fit were not found to be good comparing cut-off values (see Table 2). We found two items from employee engagement to have less factor loading (e.g. "I get carried away when I am working" & "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work". Thus, were excluded and the values of model fit were found to be good, i.e. RMSEA=0.035, CFI=0.959, SRMR=0.062 & $\chi^2/df=1.404$.

Table 1 shows the values of correlation, Cronbach's alpha, and descriptive statistics. The mean values of all the observed variables were found to be between 2.78 to 4.21, and the values of Cronbach's alpha were noted well above the standard value of 0.70. We conducted correlation analysis by adding demographical variables (i.e., age, gender, etc.) to examine their level of significance with the observed variables. The values identify a non-significant association of demographical variables with observed variables. Therefore, there was no need to treat them as control variables in hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses testing

We applied SEM to test the hypotheses, and the values of model fit were found as RMSEA=0.039, CFI=0.964, SRMR=0.053 & $\chi^2/df=1.517$ (see Table 2 below on next page). Results generated through statistical analysis of the hypothesized model indicated a positive influence of transformational leadership on AC ($\gamma = .40$, $P < .01$), NC ($\gamma = .32$, $P < .01$), employee engagement ($\gamma = .54$, $P < .01$) and PSC ($\gamma = .24$, $P < .01$), while it was found to have a negative influence on few alternatives ($\gamma = -.26$, $P < .01$). In addition, LMX was found to have a positive influence on AC ($\gamma = .62$, $P < .01$), NC ($\gamma = .35$, $P < .01$), employee engagement ($\gamma = .47$, $P < .01$) and perceived sacrifices ($\gamma = .39$, $P < .01$), while it was found to have a negative influence on few alternatives ($\gamma = -.14$, $P < .01$). These results support suggested

hypotheses H1, H2, H3a and H4a. We found AC (i.e. indirect-path=.17, variance=24%, P<0.01), NC (i.e. indirect-p

ath=.13, variance=22%, P<0.01) and PSC (i.e. indirect-path=.09, variance=14%, P<0.05) performing the role of partial mediator between TL and employees work engagement, while FAC (i.e. indirect-path=-.11, variance=28%, P<0.05) was found to fully mediate this association. Similarly, AC (i.e. indirect-path=.27, variance=18%, P<0.01), NC (i.e. indirect-path=.15, variance=23%, P<0.01) and PSC (i.e. indirect-path=.14, variance=16%, P<0.01) were found to perform the role of partial mediator between LMX and employee engagement, while FAC (i.e. indirect-path=-.10, variance=12%, P<0.01) was found to fully mediate this association. These results support suggested hypotheses H3b and H4b.

Table 1: Correlation, Mean, Standard Deviation and Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean	SD
Gender	---											---	---
Age	-0.01	---										---	---
Qualification	0.04	.29**	---									---	---
Experience	-0.22*	.51**	.21**	---								---	---
TL	0.03	-0.04	-0.03	-0.09	(0.79)							3.98	0.67
LMX	0.04	-0.09	0.07	-0.05	.51**	(0.83)						3.87	0.73
AC	0.05	-0.07	0.00	-0.04	.41**	.61**	(0.81)					4.09	0.57
PS	0.05	-0.05	0.02	-0.05	.26**	.43**	.28**	(0.85)				3.57	0.76
FA	0.01	0.08	0.05	0.08	-0.28**	-0.14**	-0.13**	.17*	(0.77)			2.78	0.63
NC	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.00	.34**	.39**	.24**	.42**	-0.06	(0.86)		3.61	0.86
EWE	0.1	-0.05	0.09	0.00	.52**	.49**	.41**	.39**	-0.08	.44**	(0.89)	4.21	0.49

Note: "EWE=employee work engagement, NC=normative commitment, FA=few alternatives, PS=perceived sacrifices, AC=affectionate commitment, LMX=leader-member exchange, TL=transformational leadership, *P<0.05, **P<0.01, ()=Cronbach Alpha, SD=standard deviation"

Discussion and Implications

The study aimed to measure the effects of TL and LMX on employee engagement with the mediation of four-dimensions of commitment among police officers. This study is unique in two perspectives. First, this study considered four-dimensional whereas previous studies have examined three-dimensional concept of commitment. Second, collecting data from the police officers makes this study unique because this section is ignored in the extent literature about police workforce's WE considering four-dimensional commitment as a mediator. The study noted a significant association of TL and LMX with police employees' work engagement. Transformational leadership theory suggests that, such leaders personally participate in their subordinate's work and remove hurdles so that organizational goals may be achieved (Bass, 1997). Moreover, such leaders provide their subordinates with the opportunity of development and this make them engage in their work (Datche & Mukulu, 2015). This study noted that, along with supportive leadership (i.e. TL), the quality of leader-subordinate association is equally important towards their work engagement. Literature is clear about the fact that, in the presence of high-quality relationship between leader and subordinates, subordinates are more likely to perform better and engage in their work as they believe that there would be no communication gap (De Villiers & Stander, 2011). LMX theory also support these results, which is of the view that when an employer establishes high-quality exchange relationships with his

subordinates, he finds them more committed and engaged in their work to achieve organizational goals (Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski, & Chaudhry, 2009).

Table 2: Values of model fit for CFA and measurement model

Fit Index	χ^2 (P-value)	df	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	PClose
Standard Values	-----	--	≤ 3	≥ 0.90	< 0.10	< 0.08	Near to 1
CFA	103.929 (.012)	74	1.404	0.959	0.062	0.035	0.94
Measurement Model	115.268 (.034)	76	1.517	0.964	0.053	0.039	0.85

Note: " df= Degree of freedom, χ^2/df =Normed χ^2 , CFI=Comparative fit index, SRMR=Standard Root Mean Residual, RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation"

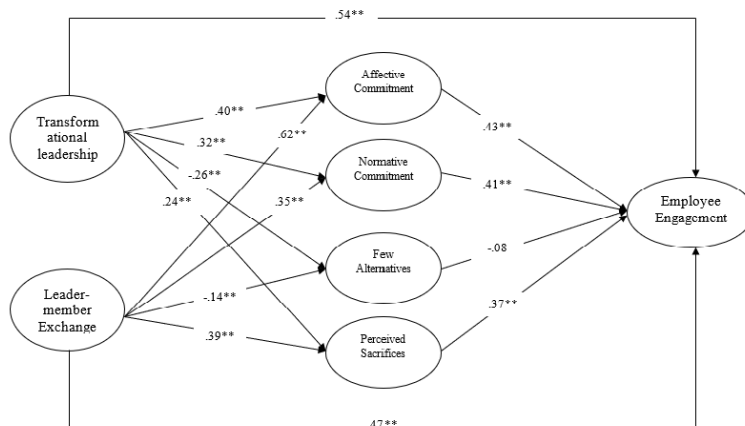


Figure 2: Measurement Model

According to Delaney (1990), the police have to work in contemporary environment where their commitment is of most importance, and this is the main issue that employees of this profession are facing across the globe. Therefore, another contribution of this study was to examine four-dimensional commitment as mediator between TL, LMX and WE. The study found, AC, NC and PSC as a partial mediator between TL, LMX and WE. Whereas, FAC was found to fully mediate the same. In police, every employee should be able to have problem solving and decision-making aptitude. In this context, transformational leaders are supportive to the followers and help them to solve problems (as they maintain high quality relationship with their subordinates i.e. LMX) thereby increasing their capabilities, competencies and transcend the self-interest towards the achievement of collective goals (Islam, Ahmed, & Ali, 2019). Thus, this study found that both TL and LMX by enhancing their subordinate’s AC, NC, PSC and reducing FAC contribute towards their subordinate’s work engagement. These arguments can further be supported by the Social exchange theory which states that when employees receive resources from his leader or organization, he/she gets committed and engaged in their work (Saks, 2006). Thus, this study suggests HR

managers and policymakers to develop effective work strategies and implementation frame work so that employees' commitment be increased. These committed employees are more likely to perform their work diligently.

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