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IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE ON THEIR PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. The authors investigate what factors impact employee attitude and how employee attitude shapes their behavior. They admit that pro-social behavior (PSB) is a consequence of internal market and learning orientation since it affects the attitude of front-line employees. Therefore, the article focuses on the internal market and learning orientation, enabling an organization's culture via employee attitudes. A survey was conducted to collect the data from managers and front-line employees at higher educational institutes in Pakistan. The findings of the study are that (1) the internal market orientation (IMO) has a positive influence on the pro-social behavior of front-line employees (FLE); (2) employee attitude mediates the effect of IMO on PSB, and (3) employee attitude mediates the effect of learning orientation (LO) on PSB. Implications of the obtained results and further research directions are also mentioned.

Keywords: internal marketing orientation; learning orientation; pro-social behavior; higher education; front-line employees; attitude; Pakistan

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1. Introduction

Service companies, irrespective of the country they operate, understand how vital pro-social behavior (PSB) of employees, especially of so-called "front-line employees (FLE)" for a company's image and performance (Sanden, & Lonsmann, 2018; Minarová et al., 2021).

Considering the importance of PSB, researchers have been trying to understand how service organizations can promote and motivate PSB in FLE (Podsakoff et al., 2009; Lages, 2012; Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are studied as positive influencing factors on PSBs of FLEs (Choi & Joung, 2017). In addition, workplace fairness is also referred to as an antecedent of PSB (Hu, 2020). Hence, this study considers two indicated dimensions of PSB. Extra-role customer behaviors refer to the extended positive behavior of FLE towards external customers, and cooperate behaviors are associated with positive behaviors of

FLE toward their colleagues, supervisors, followers, and organization (Bettencourt et al., 2005). Existing literature on service marketing urges to search for a mechanism that deliberately manages and maintains positive attitudes and PSB among FLE (Ansari et al., 2018).

Lings (2004) has documented internal market orientation (IMO) as an essential tool to maintain a positive culture within the service organization. Another study has highlighted implementing IMO within service organizations to develop and maintain positive PSB of FLE (Domínguez-Falcón et al., 2017). IMO is a process of implementing external market orientation within the organization, and there are three behavioral dimensions of IMO ‘information generation’; internal communications and internal responsiveness (Lings, 2004). Malhotra & Ackfeldt (2016) advocated internal communication as an essential dimension of IMO to enhance organizational commitment, which ultimately positively influences PSB of FLE. Sanden and Lonsmann (2018) stressed the strong impact of IMO on employee attitude. Even though rather many studies have investigated the formation process of PSB, there is still a continuous need to estimate and understand employee attitudes in different circumstances as PSB influencing factors (Choi & Joung, 2017; Buhusayen et al., 2021).

As mentioned earlier, learning aspects also develop attitudes to influence PSB of FLE (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1970). LO is a tool of higher learning in creating behaviors based on competitive advantage. LO allows employees to question any information regarding an organization's internal strategies and avoids inertia (Day, 1994; Baker & Sinkula, 1999; Alshaikh & Masmoudi, 2021).

When an organization motivates employees to learn and think out of the box, it will create a culture to act pro-actively to influence employee attitude.

The authors will study the influence of IMO and LO on PSB by mediating the employee's role in Pakistan's higher education sector. Pakistan is a bureaucratic state where command and control rules (Ahmed, 1996), and high-power distance dominates Pakistani culture (Routamaa & Hautala, 2008). Power distance culture and bureaucratic state create a need for an organizational setting that simultaneously facilitates the service organization and the management hierarchy (Leonavičienė & Burinskienė, 2021). This research adds to the existing literature by investing in the mediating role of employee attitude between IMO and LO on PSB amongst FLE in the education sector of Pakistan.

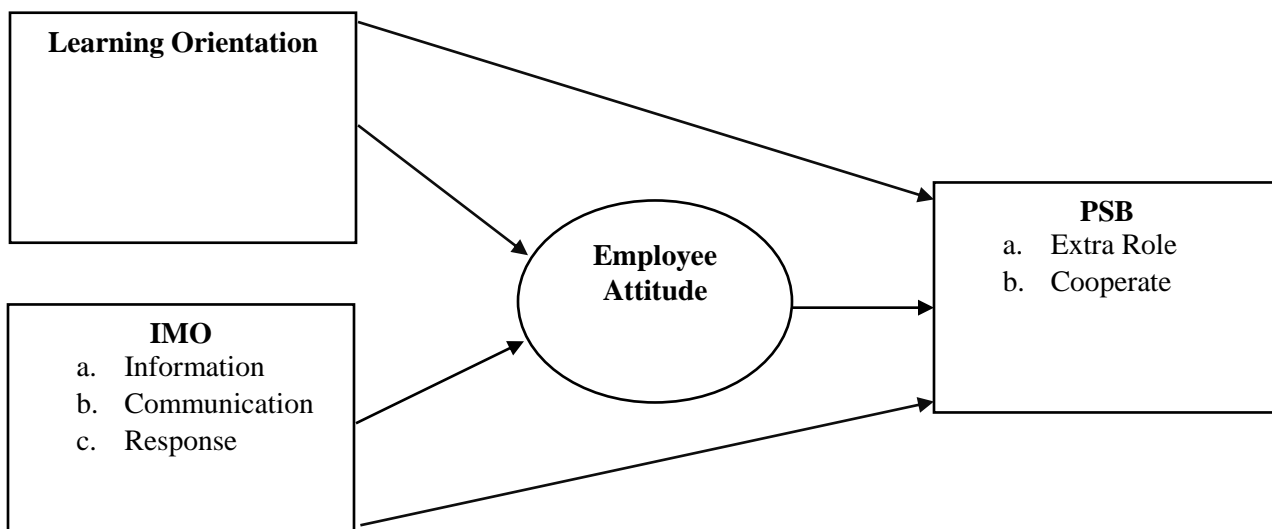


Figure 1. The conceptual framework for the impact of employee attitude on their pro-social behavior: a case study

Source: elaborated by the authors based on the review of literature

2. Literature Review

2.1 Internal Market Orientation

Internal market orientation (IMO) is an exchange between employees and the firm (Lings & Greenley, 2005). IMO has a positive and significant influence on employees' perceived ability concluded by (De bruin et al., 2021). IMO guides leadership to align the external market objectives with internal strategies through a valid process. IMO can produce positive behaviors in FLE to develop the service organization (Domínguez-Falcón et al., 2017). Existing literature has described three dimensions of IMO: information generation, communication, and responsiveness (Lings & Greenley, 2005). To gain competitive advantages, a high-performance firm should focus on improving IMO (Harrington et al., 2017; Komarac et al., 2017). Internal marketing orientation and employee motivation enhance pro-social behavior and, ultimately, strong relationships with external customers (Gazzoli et al., 2022).

There is a lot of attention to needs affecting the behavior of FLE. We can get such information through formal and informal methods, i.e., formal surveys or face-to-face meetings and daily interactions between managers and FLE (Lings & Greenley, 2005, Yousaf et al., 2020). IMO is affected as well by internal communication, which is a tool by which the service sector shares its objectives, strategies, and vision with FLE (Lings & Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2008). Consequently, it affects the behaviors of FLE by aligning their goals with organizational goals (Nassar, Strielkowski, 2022).

The third and last dimension of IMO is the response; it involves the reaction of higher management to the information generated about the needs of employees, including the requirements of FLE (Lings & Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2008; Kudins, 2022).

2.2 Learning orientation

Learning orientation (LO) is a set of beliefs that inspires the organization to use knowledge for proactive learning. So, the employees can enhance sensitivity to market change, grab opportunities, and think out of the box for creativity by questioning the organization's vision (Mavondo et al., 2005; Kipfmiller et al., 2019; Mura et al., 2021). Robust capability motivates employees, which can lead to firms' improvement in the quality of information, operationalization, and all other strategic orientations, particularly learning orientation (Baker et al., 2022).

2.3 Employee Attitude

Attitudes are long-lasting evaluations of FLE about the service organization (Mintz et al., 2020). FLE's attitude is an incomplete and debatable topic amongst researchers, and many researchers are investigating the influence of organizational culture on FLE's attitude in the service sector (Awwad & Agti, 2011). A study on attitude toward work in different generations, including baby boomers (born before 1950), generation X (born between the 1950s and 1980s), and generation Y (born in the late 1980s to 2000) analyzed by (Kamau et al., 2014). Few studies have reported corporate culture as one of the most substantial factors influencing FLE's attitude (Cherian et al., 2021; Makumbe, 2022; Abbas & Dogan, 2022).

2.4 Pro-Social behaviors

Pro-Social behaviors (PSB) are associated with the helping behaviors of FLE towards their colleagues/organization and customers in the service sector (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016). Such as friendliness, helpfulness, and generally peaceful nature of FLE (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016). Two dimensions of PSB are essential aspects of PSBs: extra-role behaviors and cooperative behaviors (Malhotra & Ackfeldt, 2016). Many studies showed that pro-socially motivated employees are determined and proactive in performing well and highly committed (Xanthopoulou et al., 2008) and build supportive relationships with other members of the organization

(Holte, 2014). Ethical leadership has a positive influence on them, and they are psychologically attached because the respect, care, and support they receive motivate them to contribute to the organization's performance (Xu et al., 2016).

2.5 Attitude theory

We utilized Attitude theory to determine mechanisms of behaviors, and actions of FLE, as the direct consequences of intentions and subjective norms, which ultimately get influenced by attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1970). Intentions are the agreeableness and willingness from the cognitive part of FLE, and subjective norms are the beliefs related to the culture, which can be different for different cultures. Attitude theory affects the ability to describe PSB of FLE in service organizations. FLE's attitudes (positive or negative) are predicted to have significant strong effects on PSB. FLE's attitudes are motivated and encouraged by inferring the internal and external factors. Any impolite policies by management will affect the FLE's philosophy negatively, which in turn will influence the behaviors and may eliminate PSB in the service sector. In short, this research considers Attitude theory to emphasize that IMO will positively affect FLE's attitude, and the outcome will be PSB.

2.6 Conceptual Development

Service industries have significant concerns regarding FLE behaviors which can be resolved through IMO (Gounaris, 2008). Lings and Greenley (2005) investigated the considerable effect of IMO on service provider external success, which can be inferred here as caused by PSB. We argue that appropriate IMO practices will motivate the FLE to align their identifications with the service organization's objective and strong desire to work hard to remain a member of a particular company (Dominguez-Falcón et al., 2017). We can make advancements towards developing a hypothesis by purposing that implementation of IMO (information, internal communication, and response) will significantly positively impact PSB (different roles and cooperation) of FLE.

Previous literature has observed that IMO influences employee attitudes (Lings & Greenley, 2005). According to Attitude theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1970), rich culture can enhance favorable and robust employee attitudes by implementing IMO through information generation, internal communications, and responses. IMO is a mechanism to empower employees, and empowerment, directly and indirectly, impacts employee attitude.

Orientation theory explains that individuals with low learning outcomes usually avoid challenging situations, while others with tangible learning outcomes stay in such conditions (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). The FLEs learn new performance standards, job roles, and expectations during the work adjustment. Individuals high on learning outcomes are naturally inspired to improve their work adjustment. Learning is a crucial factor affecting employees' attitudes and performance (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1970; Benet-Martínez & Hong, 2014; Takeuchi et al., 2019; Artusi & Bellini, 2021; Moskvina, 2022).

Let us recall that according to Attitude theory, every individual has specific perspectives, and these attitudes influence behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1970). We argue that positive attitudes about an organization will positively influence employee behaviors. This study proposes the significant effect of employee attitude on their PSB.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant favorable influence of IMO on PSB.

Hypothesis 2: IMO has a significant direct impact on employee attitude.

Hypothesis 3: Employee attitude mediates the relationship between IMO and PSB.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant favorable influence of LO on PSB.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant direct impact of LO on employee attitude.

Hypothesis 6: Employee attitude mediates the relationship between LO and PSB

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant relationship between employee attitude and PSB.

3. Research Methodology

A questionnaire was designed to evaluate the considered variables. The respondents work on the front line and as managers of the service sector in Lahore. Seven questions aim to measure IMO (Lings & Greenley, 2005). Five questions were adapted to reveal LO (Baker & Sinkula, 1999). Seven questions allowed to calculate employee attitude (Kamau et al., 2014). Five questions tackled measuring PSB (Bettencourt et al., 2005). (See Appendix 1). Preacher-Hayes model 7 has been adopted to test the hypothesis. Mediating effects, correlations, and regression analysis has been done through AMOS. The cross-Sectional technique is being used for data collection in this research. The data was collected through a question from one of the largest private universities in the largest populated province Punjab, Pakistan. Namely, the University of Lahore (UOL) is one of the youngest and most prominent Universities in Pakistan, which significantly contributes to the education sector and produce vibrant managers who successfully serve different organizations and enhance the business operations in society. FLEs from other departments of UOL working in administrative positions were selected using a convenient sampling technique. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 115 questionnaires were returned. One hundred ten usable questionnaires out of 200 questionnaires make the response rate 55%.

4. Results and Discussion

This study contributes to the research field of service marketing by investigating the cultural perspective of IMO and LO to its effects on enhancements of employee behaviors. According to the Attitude theory, IMO and LO positively influence extra-role customer service and cooperative behaviors. The results of this research are depicted graphically in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

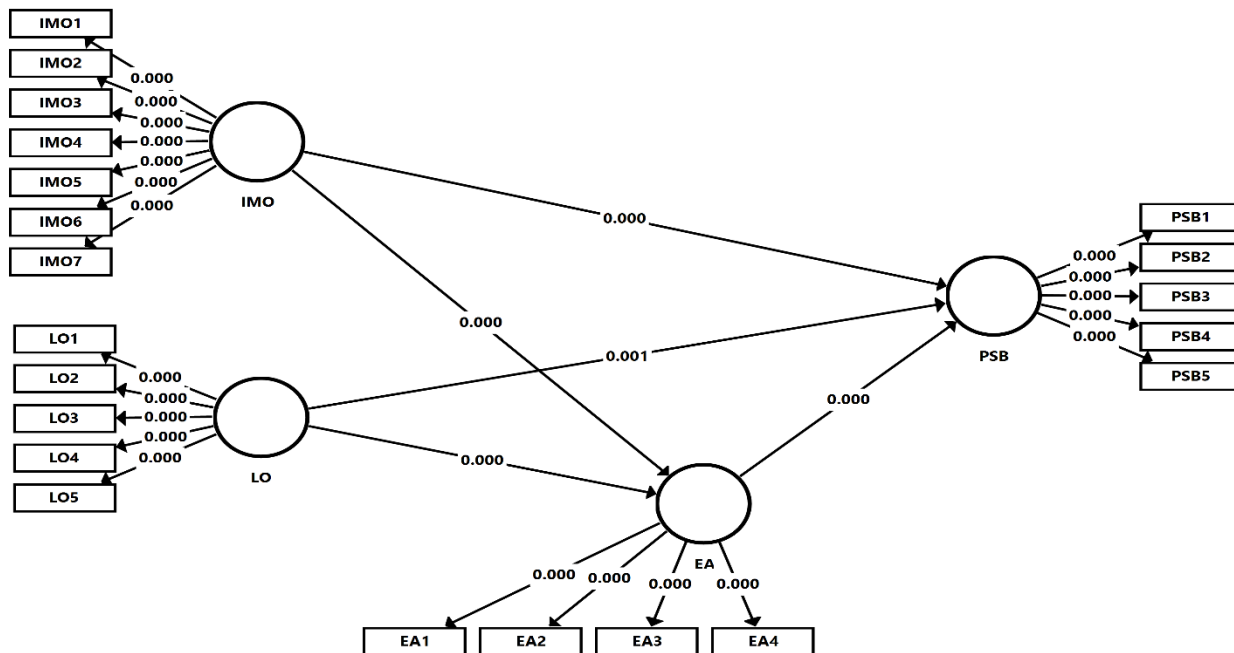


Figure 2. Results of IMO, LO on PSB and mediating relationship of EA

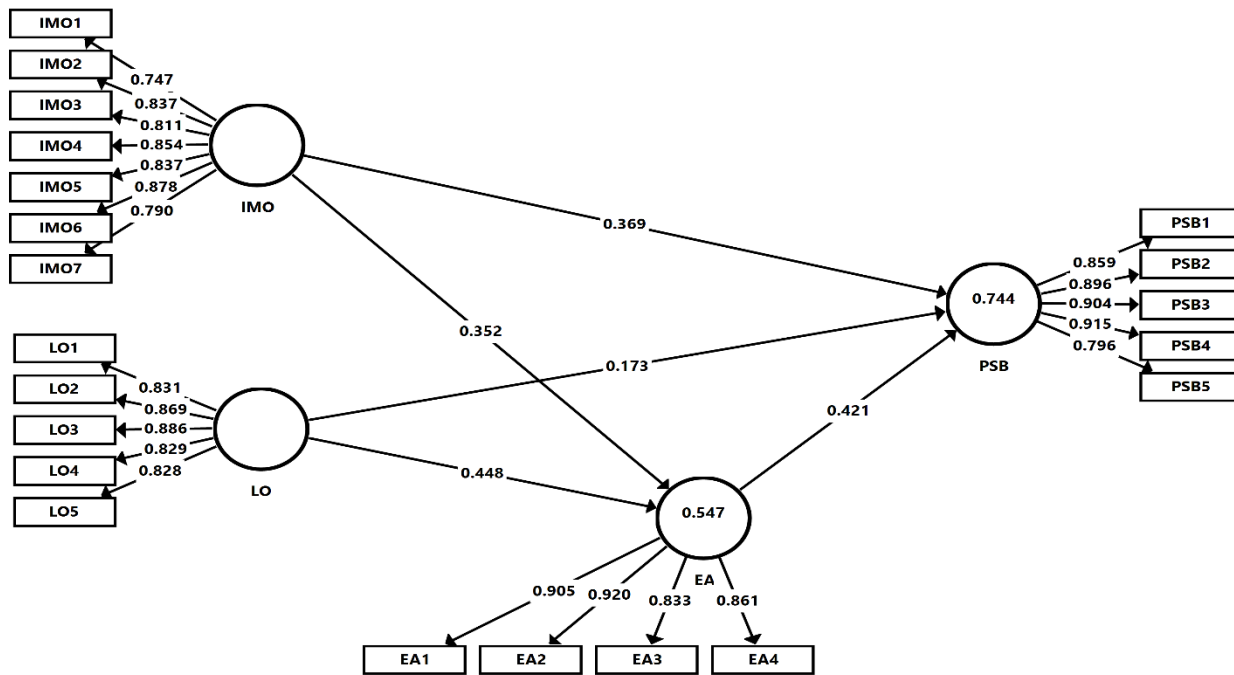


Figure 3. Results of IMO, LO on PSB and mediating relationship of EA

From a managerial perspective, our findings indicate that higher educational institutes in Pakistan must improve the quality of organizational culture by implementing IMO and LO. Internal communication with their FLEs. Effective responses and transmission of organization-related information significantly influences employees' attitude and enhances their PSB, which, in turn, spurs their behaviors towards both colleagues and customers. Hence, managers should craft the IMO and LO practices required to stimulate FLE discretionary customer service behaviors and good citizenship. Therefore, organizations operating in dynamic environments should orient their energies toward the development and upkeep of an IMO and LO culture that stimulates positive behaviors toward the end consumer and colleagues. To achieve defined goals and objectives, managers must try to transform the IMO and LO culture into behaviors.

Finally, it is vital to recognize the limitations of this study that could become the future directions for further research in this field. Foremost, the results of this study cannot be generalized because the sample of the educational institute is from The University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan only, and it would be great to apply this model in other countries. Secondly, this is a cross-sectional study; consequently, it would be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies to draw more robust conclusions. Future studies would also be interesting to analyze the other variables produced by the IMO, such as satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment. Finally, it could be helpful to incorporate the clients' perspectives in future studies. For example, to include customer evaluations of FLE and PSB to validate our findings.

Conclusions

The results of the study confirmed most of the hypothesized relationships among internal marketing orientation (IMO), learning outcomes (LO), employee attitude (EA), and pro-social behavior (PSB). The results confirmed that internal market orientation is a helpful instrument for encouraging positive employee attitudes. This study shows that top management should focus on promoting internal market orientation to improve employee attitude and pro-social behavior. Employees in the service industry, especially front-line employees, are critical in shaping the experience of new hiring; their behaviors and attitudes can create value-added for firms. This study proposed that IMO and LO affect EA directly, and EA mediates the relationship with PSB. In investigating the internal service-profit chain model, this study supported that IMO and LO were positively related to PSB directly and indirectly through EA. The findings complement previous research (Mintz et al., 2020; Cherian et al., 2021; Makumbe, 2022; Abbas & Dogan, 2022; Baker, 2022), which underline the importance of attitudes of employees and their behavior for companies' performance.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire

No	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
	(Lings & Greenley, 2005)					
1	The organization tries to find out employees' real feelings about their jobs	1	2	3	4	5
2	The organization regularly talks to the staff to find out about their work	1	2	3	4	5
3	If the organization notices an employee acting differently from average, the organization will try to find out if a problem is causing a behavior change	1	2	3	4	5
4	The organization tries to find out what employees want from the company	1	2	3	4	5
5	The organization regularly reports to my staff about issues that affect their working environment	1	2	3	4	5
6	The organization regularly meets with all staff to report on issues relating to the whole organization	1	2	3	4	5
7	When the organization finds that employees would like the organization to modify their conditions of employment, the departments make concerted efforts to do so	1	2	3	4	5
	(Baker & Sinkula, 1999)					
8	Managers agree that our ability to learn is the key to competitive advantage	1	2	3	4	5
9	The fundamental values of this business unit include learning as a key to improvement	1	2	3	4	5
10	The sense here is that learning is an investment, not an expense	1	2	3	4	5
11	Learning in my organization is a critical commodity to guarantee organizational survival	1	2	3	4	5
12	All employees are committed to the goals of learning	1	2	3	4	5
	(Kamau et al., 2014)					
13	I access information instantaneously	1	2	3	4	5
14	I am entirely different from my parents as far as work attitude is concerned	1	2	3	4	5
15	I use modern media for communications in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
16	I do not live to work but work to live	1	2	3	4	5
17	I do not like work	1	2	3	4	5
18	I do care less about salaries	1	2	3	4	5
19	I prefer more flexible working hours	1	2	3	4	5
	(Bettencourt et al., 2005)					
20	I help other employees who have heavy workloads	1	2	3	4	5
21	I am always ready to lend a helping hand to those employees around me	1	2	3	4	5
22	I help orient new employees even though it is not required	1	2	3	4	5
23	I voluntarily give my time to help other employees	1	2	3	4	5
24	I willingly help others who have work-related problems	1	2	3	4	5

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree, SA-strongly agree

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