

## What leads to Employee Engagement in Pharmaceutical Sector of Pakistan?

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### Abstract

*Managers and HR professionals are always concerned with the engagement of employees at the workplace. This study aims to explore the connection between employee engagement with job fit, psychological climate, leadership style, and affective commitment. A sample of 284 employees out of 365 participants was chosen from two pharmaceutical companies based in Karachi. SPSS was used to analyze the data and different statistical tools were applied. The results of the study showed that the independent variables i.e. job fit, psychological climate, leadership style, and affective commitment have a significant and positive influence on employee engagement. All the hypotheses were failed to reject. This study can help HR professionals in designing a strategy for retention and engagement. The results which are presented in this study can help organizations to identify the potential reasons for engagement which leads to high productivity and profitability.*

**Keywords:** employee engagement, job fit, workplace, leadership style, psychological climate

### 1. Introduction

Organizations seeking for an increased productivity need their employees to get engaged and committed to their work. With the passage of time, it has got considerable importance by the organization to lower the turnover rate (Lockwood, 2007). Although

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Employee Engagement has got considerable attention by researchers, there is still a need to identify the important drivers of engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Actually, it is the obligation of HR practitioners to search the factors related to engagement which can be included in the strategy for retention and strategic planning. Employee engagement has become an issue from the lower-level employees to CEO level (Lacy, Gupta, & Hayward, 2019; Saks & Ashforth, 2002).

The research conducted by Buckingham & Coffman (1999) and Cartwright and Holmes (2006) showed that only 30% of employees are engaged and the rest are not engaged but disengaged. The engaged employees were found to be more associated with the organization at a cognitive and physical level (Crabtree, 2004). These employees usually didn't get absent from the work (Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006) as compared to their colleagues, thus these employees save the profitability of the organization up to 86.5 million every year in terms of productivity (Gebauer, Lowman, & Gordon, 2008). Additionally, involved operatives have been revealed as an important factor for fewer accidents when employees are performing work (Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006). This study also highlights that the people who are physically, cognitively, and affectionally engaged at the workplace, brings more clients, and provide customer satisfaction and also share positive feelings and emotions with their colleagues. Earlier researches show that there is a gap in how to create employee engagement and its antecedent's variable. This gap has guided this research to work in this area.

### **1.1. Objectives**

Employee engagement is considered as a crucial factor for organizations to increase their profitability and revenue growth (Lacy, Gupta, & Hayward, 2019). Additionally, employee engagement has been revealed as an important factor for less accidents when employees are performing work (Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006). Dixit and Narendran (2019) considered employee engagement as an important factor contributing towards the business performance of the pharma industry. Jindal, Shaikh, and Shashank (2017) also identified employee engagement as a tool for talent management and employee retention in the pharmaceutical sector. Hence, this discussion leads to formulate the following objective on the research questions:

Research Objective: To suggest the model measuring the influence of Affective Commitment, Job Fit, Leadership Style, and Psychological Climate on Employee Engagement particularly in the pharmaceutical sector.

## **1.2 Gaps and Contribution**

One of the elementary problems with these studies is the subject and the context. The previous researches were conducted in different countries. Therefore generalizing their results is difficult. This research study was focused on the antecedents of employee engagement in the two pharmaceutical organizations located in Karachi only. Therefore the results cannot be generalized to the whole of the country. The factors related to the respondent's social environment and backgrounds are not considered for this study.

## **2. Literature Review**

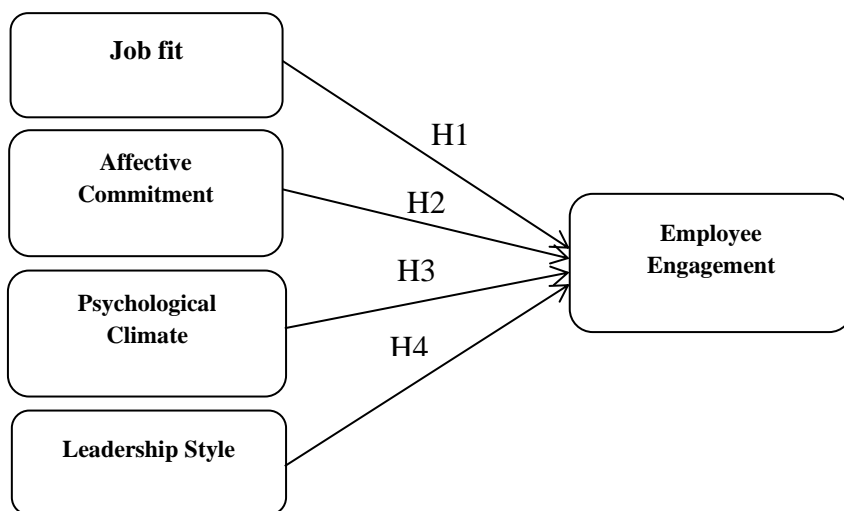
Macey and Schneider (2008) investigated four specific variables, which include the classification of fit measure, its means of calculation, dimensions, and its use as a benchmark for the established measure of person-organization fit. The strongest relationship was found between fit and job criteria, which is subjective in nature. The study also indicated that value congruency and personality negatively affect employee work engagement. Gopal (2006) indicated that when employees are not engaged properly in Singapore, it cost a loss of 6 billion dollars in the overall economy. The study also highlighted that less than 9% of employees are engaged and the rest are not engaged. Othman et al. (2019) emphasized that disengaged employees are causing a significant amount of loss to the organizations and there is a need to engage such employees because the cost of high disengagement is a serious concern for managers and organizations.

Mulki, Jaramillo, and Locander (2006) discuss the role of engagement in the job attitude. They critically examine the link between the concept of engagement, personality, and leadership with factual evidence regarding their contributions in developing job attitudes. Two hypotheses based on the theoretical model were developed to illustrate the relationship among the variables discussed in the research. Similarly, Plaut, Thomas, and Goren (2009) instituted the empirical facts on whether employee engagement influences the level of change and creativity inside the workplace. The researchers adopted the quantitative survey upheld

by qualitative interviews in computing operative assurance levels. The aftermath magnifies the act of operative employee involvement in creativity and change in the workplace. The aftermath counsel that involved operative is exhilarated in their obligations and tasks that make them to contemplate creatively and to go a supplementary mile. Moreover, Audenaert et al. (2019) discovered that employee performance is increased when they are empowered and a little sense of autonomy is observed by them. This may enhance their performance as they can take risk which may additionally momentous in reassuring creativity and innovation.

### Conceptual Framework

While reviewing the literature on this subject, it has been identified that employee engagement has been used as a dependent variable in several studies (Cooke et al., 2019; Asif, Qing, Hwang, & Shi, 2019). Whereas job fit, leadership style, affective commitment, and psychological climate have been used as independent variables (Semedo, Coelho, & Ribeiro, 2019; Erdurmazli, 2019). On the backing of these variables, taking after reasonable edge work has been made and examination is done underneath.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

## **2.1 Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is a vital and crucial factor to increase productivity and profitability. These days it has got considerable importance by the organization to lower the turnover rate (Lockwood, 2007). Although it has been discussed by some researchers, there is still very shortage on the study of engagement i.e. the drivers of engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

## **2.2 Job Fit**

Job fit characterized by Resick, Baltes, and Shantz (2007a) demonstrated a connection of employee state of mind and conduct which is powerfully identified with employee engagement and duty. Those employees who feel strongly that they have a great job fit result as experience professional comparing with their organization. The job fit gives energy to employees to set up a feeling of employee engagement at their work (Kahn, 1992).

## **2.3 Affective Commitment**

The affective commitment of employee is considered as an enthusiastic bond with the organization and has been viewed as a huge determinant of duty and commitment. Those workers who are effectively dedicated tend to build their support in the organization's exercises (Rhoades et al., 2001). Affectively dedicated employees get a feeling of seriousness in their work Kahn (1990) and feel expressively and mentally secure to interface with work (Rhoades et al., 2001).

## **2.4 Psychological Climate**

Harter et al. (2002) identified that Psychological Climate is important for the employee's learning of work and affect the advancement of employee engagement. Familiarity with security and openness with work got advanced in the psychological climate and offer certainty to people in the accomplishment of seriousness in their work parts (Rodd Wagner and Harter, 2006). The variables which influence an employee's attitude at work include job challenge or supportive manager results in positive employee engagement. Psychological Climate has been studied extensively with employee engagement and it was identified that there is a significant relationship between these concepts (Czarnowsky, 2008; Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006).

## 2.5 Leadership Style

This concept refers to the initiatives taken by a manager or supervisor to push their subordinates to achieve the goals of an organization. The style of a manager to get the work successfully done requires the motivational aspects through which employees can get engaged to the work (Hameduddin & Fernandez, 2019; Popli & Rizvi, 2016; Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013). The best practices of managers to motivate their employees may include rewards, active and passive management. The contingent rewards are the recognition of employees for their work by the management of an organization. Such awards help the managers to engage employees and achieve the maximum goals of an organization (Jilani & Juma, 2015).

Contingent reward portrays the trading of resources that happens between a leader and his employee. The important aspect of transactional leadership style, sometimes portrayed as "non-leadership" is the *laissez-faire* style. This arrangement of practices alludes to the avoidance of leadership tasks, for example, setting objectives, observing performance, and coaching which contributes towards employee engagement (Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009).

## 2.6 Job Fit and Employee Engagement

Several studies were conducted to understand the relationship between job fit and employee engagement. One of the studies was conducted by Hoffman and Woehr (2006) which suggested that job fit encourages the employees to be more involved in their jobs and have high employee engagement ultimately resulting in polishing the behaviors related to work (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Employee engagement is the state of connection of an employee where he is engaged on a long term to an organization regardless of additional benefits. It is a state where the employee is satisfied with the job and is actually engaged on the work cognitively, physically and affectionally (Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006). The people who are physically, emotionally, and cognitively engaged come to work daily and their absenteeism is low as compared to others (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). They are consistently associated with the work at all levels (Meeren, van Heijnsbergen, & de Gelder, 2005).

*H1*: Job fit positively influences Employee engagement.

## **2.7 Affective Commitment and Employee Engagement**

Affective commitment has been defined and explained by various researchers for example Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) believe there is a strong relationship between affective commitment and employee engagement. Another study was conducted by Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) and they have found it that an affective bond that employees have with their organization leads to certain important factors such as employee engagement, dedication, loyalty, and satisfaction. This concept was further researched by Saks (2006) and Perrin (2007) and they concluded that the affective commitment of the employees depends upon their emotional connection with their work.

According to Rhoades et al. (2001) and Saks (2006), there are certain antecedent factors that are necessary for determining the connection between affective commitment and employee engagement. These factors include support from supervisor, empowerment, rewards, and justice with consideration. Similarly, Rhoades et al. (2001) argued that certain outcome variables for example absenteeism, performance, and turnover also depict the level of affective commitment. These qualities show how deeply committed the employees are towards their tasks dedicated to achieve organizational goals (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003).

*H2*: Affective commitment positively influences Employee engagement.

## **2.8 Psychological Climate and Employee Engagement**

Several researches explored the meaning of psychological climate and its significance to employee engagement. It has been identified that Psychological Climate allows the employees to enjoy autonomy at work (O'Neill & Arendt, 2008). Consequently, it was found that Brown and Leigh (1996) were inspired by Kahn's (1990) original theory of engagement and believed that there exists a strong link between psychological climate and employee engagement. This relationship explains the psychological behavior of an employee and the intensity of engagement he shows at work. O'Neil and Arendt (2008) tried to explain the psychological climate through the eyes of employees, he elaborates that it is important to understand through the eyes of employees for example how they perceive meaningful

work and psychological representations of different tasks, structures, and functions of the organization. In a nutshell, the concept of psychological climate helps to determine the behavioral aspects of employees in establishing the culture of the organization (O'Neill & Arendt, 2008). On the basis of the above-mentioned literature review, the following hypothesis was created:

*H3: Psychological climate positively influences Employee engagement.*

## **2.9 Leadership Style and Employee Engagement**

A research was conducted by Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011). According to them, they say that there is a relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement. There is a medium-size correlation between employee engagement and Transformational Leadership. Another research was conducted by three of the famous authors Purvanova, Bono, and Dzwieczynski (2006). They have elaborated on this link which clearly shows that employee perceptions on employee engagement and job importance is one of the mediating factors between Employee Engagement and Transformational Leadership. Macey and Schneider (2008) have jointly worked and discussed on multi-dimensional nature of employee engagement. According to them, they say that Transformational Leadership has an impact on Employee Engagement.

Employee engagement is the state of connection of an employee where he is engaged on a long term to an organization regardless of additional benefits. It is a state where the employee is satisfied with the job and is actually engaged on the work cognitively, physically and affectionally (Rodd Wagner & Harter, 2006). The people who are physically, emotionally, and cognitively engaged come to work daily and their absenteeism is low as compared to others (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999), they are consistently associated with the work at all levels (Meeren, van Heijnsbergen, & de Gelder, 2005).

Transactional and transformational leadership attributes are the personality traits of the leaders through which managers can motivate their employees and accomplish the organizational goals. These are the leadership styles that help in increasing employee engagement (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006). On the basis of this



relationship between leadership style and employee engagement, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H4: Leadership style positively influences Employee engagement.*

### **3. Methodology**

The research design is based on a quantitative approach. SPSS 18 was used to evaluate the hypotheses. A questionnaire was used to collect the responses. Different statistical tests were conducted to analyze the data. These statistical tests include reliability (Cronbach's Alpha), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Validity (Convergent & Discriminant), correlation (Karl Pearson Bivariate Correlation), and regression analysis.

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

Employees of pharmaceutical companies were selected as the population for this study and the total of this population was approximately more than 7000 employees. The sample size calculated through Raosoft (2004) for this study which was 365 participants. The total number of the received questionnaire was 383. All the respondents who participated in this research were on a voluntary basis. The response rate was 78%. The sampling technique employed for this study is Convenience sampling (non-probability). It is simple, fair, and reasonable to collect the data, select a sample, accomplish the result, and generalize the results through this sampling technique. If arbitrary selection is done properly, the sample is, therefore, representative of the entire population (Lund, 2012). Three modified scales which were originally developed by May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) that are used to measure an individual's grade of employee engagement at work. This is a 17-item scale. The reliability of this scale in this study is  $\alpha = .89$ .

#### **3.2 Measurement & Scale**

The Person-Organization Fit Scale was developed by Kasemsap (2013) that is a 5-item scale where participants were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The coefficient alpha for the Person-Organization Fit Scale in the present study was  $\alpha = .92$ . The instrument used for measuring Affective commitment has been used by Allen & Meyer (1996) and Meyer, Allen, and Gellatly (1990). The Affective commitment scale is a 6-item scale. The reliability estimates between .74 and .88.

## 4. Results

This section describes the demographic profiles and the statistical analysis conducted on the basis of the data collected from the respondents.

### 4.1. Respondents' Profile

Demographics of the respondents selected for this study are discussed in Table 1 which includes the information regarding their age, income, and education. It was noticed that majority of the respondents were male, and the marital status of most of the respondents were single. It was also noticed that young employees were the majority in numbers i.e. 44%. The income of the majority of people were found between 31 to 40 thousand PKR.

**Table 1**

#### *Profile of Respondents*

Variable		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	245	64
	Female	138	36
Age	21-30 yrs	168	44
	31-40 yrs	128	33
	41-50 yrs	69	18
	Greater than 50 yrs	18	5
Income	Till 20K	40	11
	21K-30K	130	34
	31K-40K	170	44
	41K & above	43	11
Marital Status	Single	234	61
	Married	149	39
Education	10 Yrs (Matric)	58	15
	12 Yrs (Inter)	178	47
	16 Yrs (Grad)	105	27
	18 Yrs (Post Grad)	38	9
	22 Yrs (PhD)	4	1

### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The normality of the data was ascertained through descriptive statistics which is summarized in Table 2. Results contain the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values. The acceptable

range of Skewness and Kurtosis for satisfying the conditions of univariate normality is  $\pm 3.5$  (Harlow, 2014).

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics results. It can be seen that the values of lowest and highest skewness are referred to Leadership Style (Mean = 4.799, SD= 1.066, SK= -0.270), and Employee Engagement (Mean = 4.757, SD = 0.873, SK= -0.676) respectively. The Kurtosis for Psychological climate is positive while all the other items have a negative kurtosis. The values of lowest and the highest kurtosis are referred to Affective Commitment (Mean = 4.800, SD = 0.9446, KT= -.125) and Employee Engagement (Mean = 4.757, SD = 0.873, KT= -0.568) respectively.

**Table 2**

***Descriptive Analysis***

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Job Fit	4.6396	1.29006	-.613	-.089
Affective Commitment	4.8004	.94463	-.402	-.125
Psychological climate	4.9060	.85622	-.556	.087
Leadership Style	4.7998	1.06652	-.270	-.940
Employee engagement	4.7571	.87389	-.676	-.568

#### **4.2. Reliability of the Constructs**

The reliability of the variables for engagement was already measured by Buchanan and Bryman (2007), therefore validities were already proven. For this study please refer to Table 3 for results:

Table 3 shows the results of reliability analysis and items retained after conducting the reliability analysis tests. The reliability of employee engagement is at the highest i.e.  $\alpha=.81$  (M=4.75, SD=0.87), while the reliability for leadership style is at the lowest i.e.  $\alpha=.60$  (M=4.79, SD=1.06). Results show that all of the Cronbach's Alpha values of the constructs were found greater than 0.6 which lies under the acceptable range of Cronbach's Alpha values, which shows that items within the constructs have internal consistency as Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) suggests these values.

### **4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

Exploratory factor analysis is used to determine the relationships with the constructs. Please refer to table 4 for the obtained results.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is used to explore whether the variable has linear relationships or not. Hair et al., (2006) suggests that the  $KMO > 0.6$  lies in the acceptable range. The results depict significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for all the constructs, i.e.  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3**  
*Reliability of the Constructs*

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized Item.	No. of items	Mean	Std. Dev.
Job Fit	0.78	0.78	5	4.63	1.29
Affective Commitment	0.68	0.68	6	4.80	.94
Psychological Climate	0.67	0.67	5	4.90	.85
Leadership Style	0.61	0.66	5	4.79	1.06
Employee Engagement	0.81	0.81	14	4.75	.87

**Table 4**  
*EFA for the Constructs*

Constructs	Original Items	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Item Retained	Cumulative Factor Loading
Job Fit	5	0.78	966	5	70%
Affective Commitment	6	0.68	447	5	64%
Psychological Climate	5	0.67	236	5	65%
Leadership Style	5	0.60	157	4	72%
Employee Engagement	10	0.81	602	7	67%

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

To explore the connection among the variables and find out the effect of multicollinearity, it is necessary to pass the test of correlation (Lund, 2012). Bell and Bryman (2007) suggest that the value of the correlation coefficient must exist between 0.20-0.90. Please refer to Table 5 for correlation results.

**Table 5**

*Summarized Correlation Results*

Constructs	EE	JF	AC	PC	LS
Employee engagement	1.00				
Job Fit	0.68	1.00			
Affective Commitment	0.57	0.70	1.00		
Psychological Climate	0.51	0.45	0.51	1.00	
Leadership Style	0.42	0.31	0.41	0.40	1.00

#### 4.5 Construct validity

Construct validity is important to determine whether the used variables are applicable to given context or not (Fowler & Cosenza, 2009).

**Table 6**

*Discriminant Validity*

	EE	JF	AC	PC	LS
Employee engagement	0.82				
Job Fit	0.47	0.84			
Affective Commitment	0.32	0.50	0.80		
Psychological Climate	0.26	0.20	0.26	0.81	
Leadership Style	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.85

#### 4.6.Overall Model Regression Test

The conceptual model developed for this study was tested using the multiple regression test. The summarized results are presented in Table 7 below:

**Table 7**  
**Regression Results for Overall Model**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.471	.301		1.565	.119
JF_T	.431	.048	.521	9.034	.000
AC_T	.039	.069	.034	.558	.577
PC_T	.235	.061	.189	3.840	.000
LS_T	.208	.056	.171	3.716	.000

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement,  $R^2 = .178$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .544$ ,  $F(4,278)=82.6$ ,  $p < 0.05$

The regression results show that the overall model indicates that the predictors' Job fit, Psychological climate, and Leadership style are significant as  $p < .05$ , whereas the effect of predictor affective commitment was found as non-significant.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study used four predictor variables that include Job Fit, Affective Commitment, Psychological Climate, and Leadership Style. It was found that job fit was the strongest predictor for the dependent variable employee engagement followed by psychological climate and leadership style.

For H1 related to the positive influence of job fit on employee engagement has been substantiated ( $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $T = 9.03$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). When employees found the right degree of job fit in their jobs they are found to be more engaged at the workplace (Bakker, Hakanen, & Demerouti, 2007).

For H2 related to the influence of affective commitment on employee engagement has been rejected ( $\beta = 0.03$ ,  $T = 0.56$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This result shows that there is no significant effect of affective commitment on employee engagement when the employees found support from their colleagues. Although this effect was found significant in the literature (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006), this study proved a non-significant effect of affective commitment.

For H3 related to the influence of the psychological climate on employee engagement has been substantiated ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $T = 3.84$ ,  $p <$

0.05). When the supervisors are open to suggestions and new ideas, it motivates employees which ultimately results in a high level of engagement (Zigarmi, 2008).

For H4 related to the influence of Leadership style on employee engagement has been substantiated ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $T=3.71$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). When immediate supervisor tells their employees about the organization's vision and future plans, their role in this regard and opportunities they can get to grow, it ultimately motivates employees and leads to the high level of engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

## **6. Conclusion**

The research present sufficient evidence that the instrument is applicable to local context and culture in contrast to the studies conducted in other contexts and cultures. This specifies that sound multicultural and psychometric measures can be used in assessing employee engagement. The research also shows relationships amid leadership style, affective commitment, employee engagement, job fit, and psychological climate. This consistency suggests that workers in developing and developed countries are relatively similar in reference to the factors that engage these individuals to stay in their organizations. Consequently, it points out to the generalizability of the theories of leadership style, affective commitment, employee engagement, job fit, and psychological climate that were developed and tested in Western culture and applied in Pakistani culture.

In the Pharmaceutical sector, employees are required to be trained for better sustainability and performance. As the Pharma industry is continuously growing, there can be several improvements required for employees in the context of employee engagement (Ahmed, 2020; Aamir & Zaman, 2011). The job fit, leadership style, and psychological climate can play a significant role in enhancing employee engagement which will ultimately enhance the overall performance of the industry.

## **7. Implication for Managers**

This study can help HR professionals in designing a strategy for turnover intention. The results which are presented in this study can help organizations to identify the potential reasons for engagement which leads to high productivity and profitability. Since this study



was conducted using the sample of employees in a pharmaceutical sector, it can also help managers in the pharma industry to engage employees without increasing the budget by just focusing on the organizational climate. Managers are responsible to build the conducive environment of the organization by having a supportive attitude, providing positive feedback, giving empowerment, telling the truth, and leading them to the future. These actions not only make organizational climate positive but also leads employees to affective commitment.

This study can help managers in designing a suitable strategy for compensation and benefits. This research breaks some of the myths that high salary engages employees, whereas this study proves that a suitable job role, positive climate are related to a high level of engagement (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007).

Government regulatory bodies can also take advantage of this research and make regulations for pharmaceutical employees so that if they are less happy with their job or facing bad leadership styles can report to the respective authorities. Moreover, this research opens the doors for academicians specifically the business schools to make their students learn about the employee engagement and factors influencing it. Academicians can further explore the factors influencing employee engagement in the pharmaceutical sector by using the qualitative approach.

## **8. Limitations and Future Research**

The first limitation of this study was the use of a convenience sample. The samples used in this study are the employees of two pharmaceutical companies operating in the metropolitan city of Pakistan, which is Karachi. The generalizability of the findings are restricted across or other similar industries. There are several limitations to this study, which are as follows:

1. This research study collected data on all measures through self-reported questionnaire. The only source was the employees through which data was collected to test the hypotheses. As a consequence, the observed relationships might be susceptible.
2. Longitudinal data should be established to evaluate the consistency and strength of the relationships being investigated.
3. It is also important to fully understand the influence of national culture on employee engagement to include and assess statistically the relationship between national culture and employee engagement.

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