MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND TURNOVER INTENTION IN PAKISTANI UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: *The prime objective of the research is to study the mediating role of organizational commitment (OC) between the relationship of occupational stress and turnover intention (TI) among university teaching staff in Malakand Division, Pakistan. Data were collected from 186 faculty members working in government universities of Malakand division which was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. The results showed a significant positive relationship of psychological and physiological stress with TIs and negative with OC. Furthermore, OC mediated the relationship between psychological and physiological stress and TI.*

Keywords: Organizational commitment, stress, turnover, Pakistan, academics

Introduction

Occupational stress occurs when demands of one's workplace exceeds one's ability to meet those demands. When job requirements are not compatible with employees' skills, resources and needs render employees not being able to adapt to working conditions (Hsieh, et al., 2004) and consequent of which is stress. Stress can be caused due to different factors such as job demands, insufficient resources and time, lack of required support from coworkers and boss (Gillespie, et al., 2001) deadlines, work overload, unsupportive boss, unpleasant colleagues and many more.

Stress can affect employees' physiological and psychological health. Physiological effects of stress are changes in appetite, increased blood pressure, migraine and even heart attack and Psychological symptoms of stress include tension, anxiety, frustration, and boredom. A research study aimed to find the physiological effects of stress on employees over time reported that high work load causes stress which resulted in high blood pressure and lower emotional well-being (Illies, et al., 2010). Indeed job with high demands and ambiguous roles, authority and responsibilities and perceived lack of control over the job increases stress and dissatisfaction among employees. Further jobs

characterized by routine activities, low autonomy, low or no feedback causes stress, reduce satisfaction and job involvement.

University jobs were previously considered as satisfying and stress free (Sales & House, 1971). It was regarded that different factors such as tenure, flexibility and autonomy innate in the academic job will provide protection to the employees from occupational stress (French et al, 1982; Karasek & Theorell, 1990). In addition to this, a culture of collegiality prevailing in the academic world is thought to provide a protection and support to the people in potentially stressful conditions (Gmelch, Lovrich & Wilke, 1984). The situation has now been changed and university lecturers experience equal pressures as other professionals (Thorsen, 1996). A study surveyed 1200 teachers from 80 American universities to find the stress level in academic staff and reported major source of the stress came from the work. The highly cited stressors were related to general and job specific factors for instance high self-expectations, inadequate salary, pressure to write proposal to obtain research funding, publishing papers, heavy workload, and lack of time to keep up with the development in the research area, work life balance, no career development, and role conflict (Gmelch, 1984). Recent research by Winfield and Jarret (2001) on stress among academics raised concerns by reporting that occupational stress is increasing in universities. According to the Taris, et al. (2001) stressed academics react in a number of ways one of which is leaving the university which imposes a number of costs to the organizations. The goal of this paper is to find the mediating role of OC between the relationship of job stress and TIs which will guide us to minimize turnover from perceived job stress by increasing commitment of the employee.

TI has become a big problem for the organizations and critical issue for the management (Chen, Lin and Lien, 2010). TIs can be defined as a conscious attempt to reduce the performance and the intentions to quit job (Applebaum, et al., 2010). It has been found that the stress in employees' leads to the increased TIs (Applebaum, et al., 2010; Chen, Lin and Lien, 2010). Similarly Noor and Maad (2008) also found that stress is positively related with TIs. Literature on TIs included such studies, aimed to investigate the impact of demographic variables on the TIs. These studies reported that demographic variable such as age and tenure have consistent negative association with TIs. However there were mixed finding regarding the relationship of turn over intentions with sex, education and number of members in family. Some studies proposed that task-relevant ability characterized by the individual's perception of ease and desirability of movement is associated with TIs (Blau, 1987).

OC is defined "by the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization" (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 74). Thus an employee is considered as committed to a particular organization if he/she can identify with the goals of the organization, work hard to achieve them and want to maintain his membership. There are three components proposed by Meyer and Allen (1990) which are affective, normative, and continuance. Affective component is characterized by the emotional attachment of an employee with his organization and its goals. He or she believes in the objectives and values of the organization and therefore wants to stay with the organization for the attainment of its goals. As for the normative component, it is employee's internal feelings of obligation to his organization. He feels or thinks that he should stay and that is why he retains membership in the organization. Continuance commitment is related to the calculative decision for instance, an employee remains member of the organization because he finds no other better opportunity or quitting is costly. These three components indicate psychological bonding of employees with their organizations due to which they do not leave their organizations.

For the study, following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Physiological and psychological stresses are positively related to TI.

H2: Physiological and psychological stresses are negatively related to organizational commitment.

H3: OC is negatively related to TI.

H4: OC mediates the relationship between physiological and psychological stress and TI.

Sample and Data Collection

For the purpose of study, data was collected from 186 teachers working in government sector universities (in Malakand Division) namely, University of Malakand, Swat University and Banazir Bhutto University. There were 250 questionnaire distributed to teachers including Lecturers, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor out of which 197 were returned showing a response rate of 78.8%. However 186 questionnaires were used for the analysis while remaining were discarded due to incomplete information.

Measurements and Scale

Physiological stress was measured through eight items scale adapted from Seaward (2005). Five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not/never meet) to 5 (exceeds all expectation/always) was used to record the responses. Cronbach's Alfa for Physiological stress scale was .87 indicating a very good reliability. For psychological stress, five items were developed by using the literature of Beehr, et al. (2001), Cox, et al. (2000). Five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not / never meet) to 5 (exceeds all expectation / always) was used to record the responses. Cronbach's Alfa for Psychological stress scale was .91 indicating a very good reliability. And for TI, three items were adapted from Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al, 1979). Five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to record the responses. Cronbach's Alfa for TI scale was .95 indicating a very good reliability. As for the organizational commitment, it was measured through eighteen items adapted from Porter, et al. (1979). OC scale has three dimensions, namely, affective commitment, continuous commitment and normative commitment. Each dimension has six items. Five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) was used to record the responses. Cronbach's Alfa for affective, continuous and normative commitment was .88, .95 and .84 respectively.

Results

The results of correlation showed a significant positive relationship between occupational stress and TI while a significant negative relationship between OC and TI was noted.

Table 1 *Correlation among Occupational Stress, Organizational, Commitment, TI.*

	Occupational Stress	**Organizational Commitment**	**TI**
Occupational Stress	1.00		
Organizational Commitment	-.76**	1.00	
TI	-.81**	-.64**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) explored that physiological and psychological stress had 0.64 significant and positive impact on employees' TI. This beta value indicates that psychological and physiological stresses are the

predictors of TI. So the first condition for testing the mediating effect of OC between occupational stress and TI was satisfied. This two factor model of physiological and psychological stress and TI revealed a very good fit of the sample data. Chi square for these two factors model is 253.94, DF is 87, probability level is .000, GFI is 0.896, CFI is 0.941, RMSEA is 0.042. All above values of GFI, CFI and RMSEA are acceptable. Thus Hypothesis 1 that states that physiological and psychological stress are positively related to TI is accepted

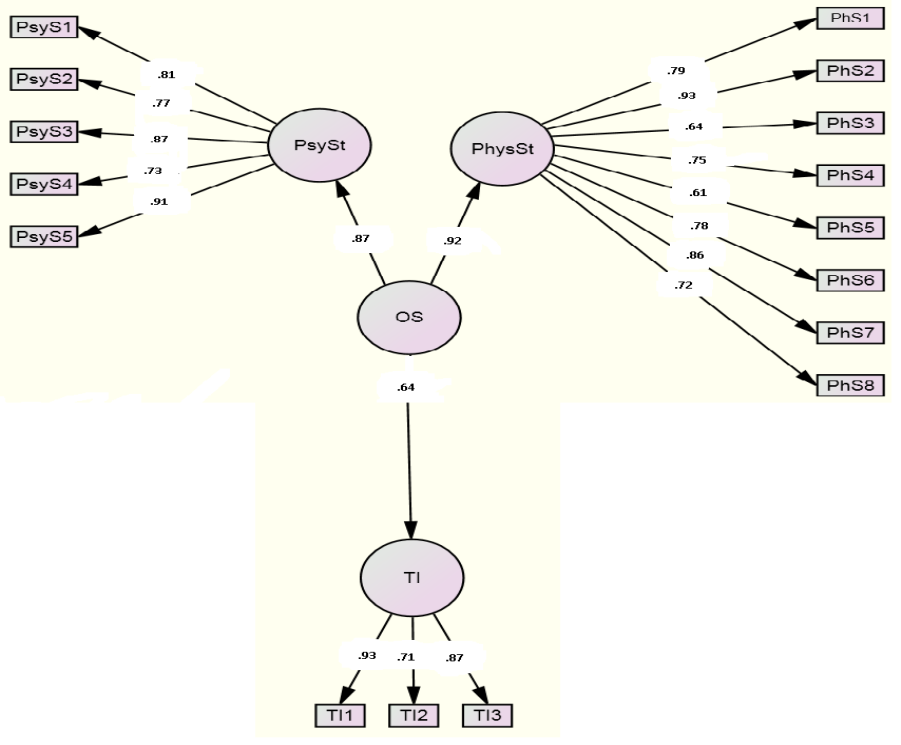

Figure 1: Direct Path from Psychological and Physiological Stress to TI

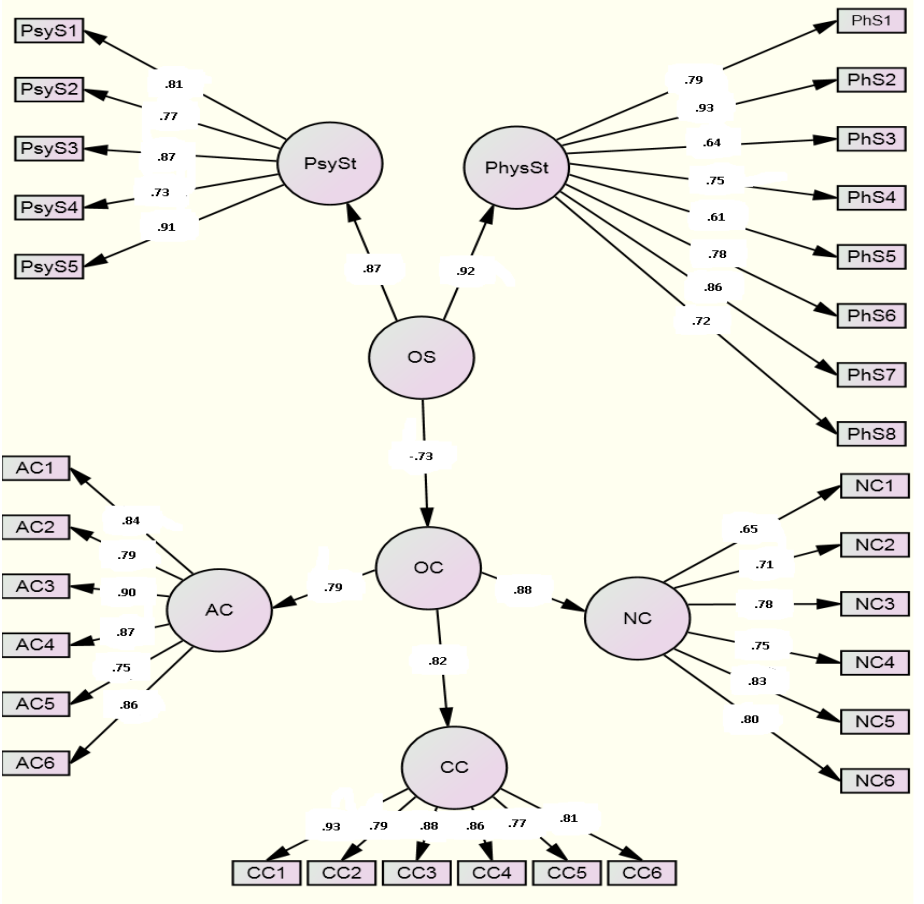

Figure 2: Direct Path from Psychological and Physiological Stress to Organizational Commitment

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (See Graph 2) explored that physiological and psychological stress had -.73 significant and negative impact on organizational commitment. This beta value indicates that psychological and physiological stresses are the predictors of organizational commitment. So the second condition proposed by Barren and Canny (1986) for testing the mediating effect was satisfied. This two factors model of physiological and psychological stress and OC revealed a very good fit of the sample data. Chi square for these two factors model is 459.02, DF is 154, probability level is .000, GFI is 0.887, CFI is 0.922, RMSEA is 0.034. All above values of GFI, CFI and RMSEA are acceptable. Hypothesis 2 that states that physiological and psychological stresses are negatively related to OC is accepted.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Figure 3) explored that OC had -.68 significant and negative impact on TI. This beta value indicates that OC is a strong predictor of TI. So the third condition proposed by Barren and Canny by (1986) for testing the mediating effect of OC between occupational stress and TI was also satisfied. This two factors model of OC and TI revealed a very good fit of the sample data. Chi square for these two factors model is 326.57, DF is 101, probability level is .000, GFI is 0.902, CFI is 0.953, RMSEA is 0.058. All above values of GFI, CFI and RMSEA are acceptable. Thus, Hypothesis 3 that states that OC is negatively related to TI is accepted.

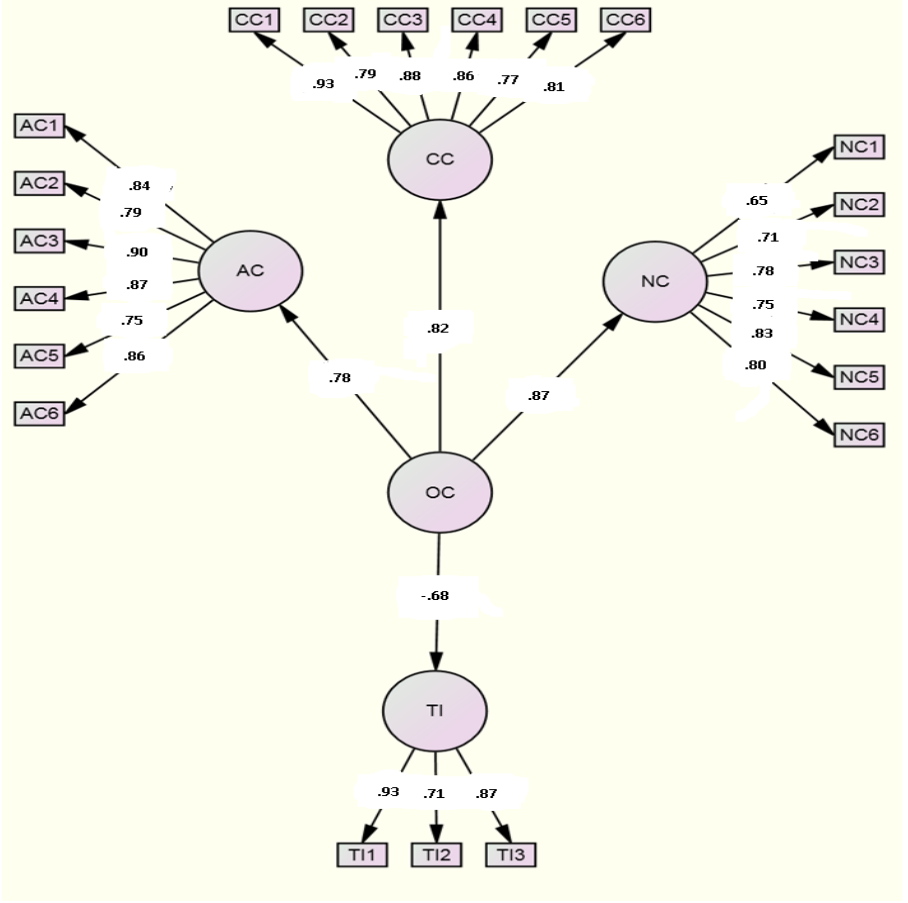

Figure 3: Direct Path from OC to TI

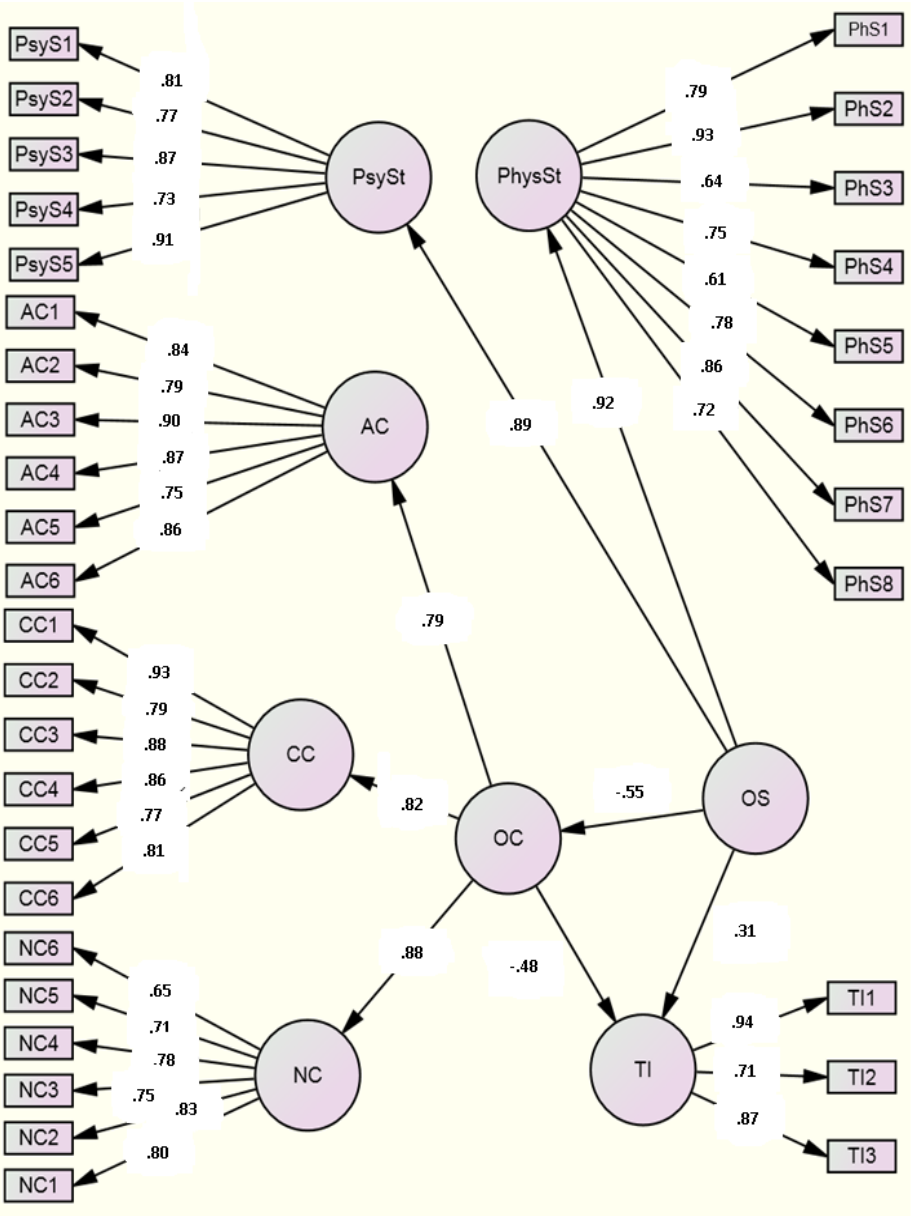

Figure 4: Indirect Path from Psychological and Physiological Stress to TI through OC

Structural Equation Modeling explored that the direct impact of psychological and physiological stress on TI was .64 (figure 1). After the

induction of OC as a mediator, beta value between physiological and psychological stress and TI declined from .64 to .31. Thus OC partially mediated the relationship between occupational stress and TI .Further, the three factors model of organizational commitment, physiological and psychological stress and TI revealed a very good fit of the sample data. Chi square was 868, DF is257, probability level is .001, GFI is 0.947, CFI = 0.970; RMSEA = 0.008.Thus, hypothesis 4 is also accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of study was to investigate the mediating role of OC between occupational stress and TIs in academia in Malakand Division, Pakistan. The relationship between occupational stress and turnover is negative which corroborate with the findings of Layne, Hohenshil, and Singh (2004). Occupational stress leads to job dissatisfaction which give rise to leaving the organization intention (Applebaum, et al., 2010). The study also reveals negative relationship between occupational stress and OC which is consistent with the findings of Lambert and Paoline (2008), Lee, (2007) and Boyas, and Wind (2009). There is negative relationship between OC and TIs. The employees do not intend to leave the organization when there is emotional bonding with the organization and their jobs. The data also found that the OC play a mediating role between occupational stress and TI. Thus, universities need to put more efforts in increasing commitment of the employees in order to reduce turnover due to work related stress.

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