Original Research Article

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Organizational Commitment: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Higher Education Institutions in Punjab

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Abstract: *This study examined and compared levels of organizational commitment (OC) between public and private university teachers in Punjab province, Pakistan. Understanding distinctions in factors influencing teacher retention and engagement across institutional contexts holds value. Yet this topic remains under-researched, especially locally. Multistage stratified sampling selected comparable public and private Punjab-based universities and faculty profiles. A sample of 315 public and private sector university faculty completed an adapted (OC) scale. Independent t-tests and descriptive analyses were utilized to assess differences across affective, normative, and continuance commitment means. Analyses revealed moderately higher overall OC among public university teachers, particularly driven by heightened continuance commitment tied to perceiving greater barriers and difficulties exiting their jobs. Affective and normative commitment promoting emotional connections and a sense of obligation also differed slightly. Tailored OC interventions should account for public teachers' "trapped" mindsets due to limited career alternatives; private faculty warrant strengthening of socioemotional rewards and mentoring. Developing context-appropriate retention strategies necessitates addressing differential needs across university types. Implementing targeted professional growth, culture building, career pathing services, and HR policies catering to distinct public and private settings can enhance teacher commitment. Further qualitative inquiries to deeply explore influencing factors are also advised.*

Introduction and Literature Review

The foundations of organizational commitment have been established in the seminal works of the researchers (Barnard, 1968; Becker, 2010; Kanter, 2017; Simon, 1945). These studies revealed that employees are inclined to work for organizations that satisfy their needs, whereas they are prone to leave should those needs remain unfulfilled. Moreover, Barnard (1938) linked organizational effectiveness to the degree of employee commitment. Further research by Saridakis et al. (2018) indicates that higher commitment levels among the workforce engender enhanced efficiency and performance of routine organizational functions.

The multidimensional nature of organizational commitment has been extensively delineated by Meyer et al. (1993), who put forward three distinct forms. The first conception defines commitment as employees' psychological attachment and sense of allegiance to their organization. The second approach centres on comparing alternative workplaces to ascertain the optimal job choice. Finally, the third dimension captures employees' mindset toward retaining organizational membership out of an internalized conviction that staying is morally right. These three forms are widely recognized as affective, continuance, and normative

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commitment, respectively.   Ascertain the optimal job choice. Finally, the third dimension captures employees' mindset toward retaining organizational membership out of an internalized conviction that staying is morally right. These three forms are widely recognized as affective, continuance, and normative commitment, respectively.   They were retaining organizational membership out of an internalized conviction that staying is morally right. These three forms are widely recognized as affective, continuance, and normative commitment, respectively.

Affective commitment (AC) entails fondness for and emotional bonding with the organization. According to Steers (1977), employees' AC stems from positive work experiences. Meyer and Allen (1991) posit that AC reaches its highest intensity when employees are satisfied with organizational rewards and incentives, identify with the organizational values, and become genuinely involved in their work roles. Such effectively committed individuals tend to maintain organizational membership and are unlikely to consider turnover. In addition, AC gives rise to beneficial behaviours such as superior task performance, productivity, and organizational effectiveness, thus enhancing overall organizational success (Lovakov, 2016). yours, such as superior task performance, productivity, and organizational effectiveness, thus enhancing overall organizational success (Lovakov, 2016).

Continuance commitment refers to employees' recognition of the benefits they receive from the organization and awareness of the potential costs associated with leaving, such as difficulty finding an equivalent position. As Wilkes (2017) explains, employees with limited options feel compelled to remain to maintain their standard of living. In contrast with affective commitment stemming from emotional attachment, continuance commitment arises from a calculation of economic rationale and necessity. Nonetheless, research suggests that continuance commitment reduces employees' intentions to quit (Shiu et al., 2014).

Meanwhile, normative commitment encapsulates the sense of moral obligation driving employees to remain within the organization (Jin et al., 2018). According to the psychological contract perspective, as organizations invest in employee development, loyalty and reciprocity norms engender. Although under-researched compared to other forms of commitment, normative commitment originates from employees' internalized duty and gratitude for organizational support throughout their careers (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). Whereas affective commitment represents wanting to stay, continuance commitment involves needing to stay, and normative commitment refers to feeling one ought to stay. Despite their distinct bases, the three forms of commitment interact in shaping employees' experiences and behaviours (Meyer et al., 1993).

Additionally, commitment levels demonstrate variance across organizational contexts. Among the least committed employees are those in coercive organizations like prisons, while moderate commitment characterizes public agencies, and nonprofit service groups enjoy the highest commitment (Puusa et al., 2017). Analyses also indicate the highest commitment in private companies, followed by nonprofits and, finally, public organizations (Andrews et al., 2019). Beyond benefiting organizations, research links commitment to reduced employee stress (Montani et al., 2017) and greater work satisfaction and performance. Within educational institutions, elevated commitment contributes to positive academic climates and student success (Pusa et al., 2017). Thus, given the value of knowledgeable and specialized employees, organizations aim to engender commitment as a means of retention and maximizing human capital (Choe et al., 2017).

Several studies reveal positive associations between organizational justice perceptions and commitment levels (Buluc & Gunes, 2014; Karaca, 2017). When employees experience fair interpersonal treatment and transparent processes, their affective bonds strengthen along with citizenship behaviours. Such findings highlight the influence leaders have through enacting justice and consideration of employee needs and inputs.

Within developing countries like Pakistan, experts underline the necessity of higher education for advancing science, technology, and innovation critical for socioeconomic progress (Arciénaga et al., 2018). While faculty retention poses a key challenge, committed academics directly impact institutional effectiveness and student outcomes (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). Nonetheless, limited research explores these dynamics within Pakistan's higher education sector, particularly differences across public and private universities. This study addresses those gaps by evaluating the status, determinants, and decline

of organizational commitment among faculty. In the Pakistani context, there are few studies. In a study, the organizational environment of the public universities of Punjab was explored (Sajid et al., 2022). At the university level, another study was conducted regarding the relationship between the organizational environment and teachers' citizenship behaviour. Another study was conducted about secondary school teachers' empowerment and organizational commitment (Muhammad et al., 2022).

Universities promote knowledge, produce experts, and improve standards of living, thinking and behaving in society, yet their most important asset is their teachers. Behavioural factors like collegiality, organizational justice, job satisfaction, stress, ethical climate and organizational citizenship further impact commitment. Fears, worries, anxiety, burnout and dissatisfaction then lower teacher commitment to their university. Recent interactions with public and private sector university teachers revealed these issues firsthand. Research on academic organizational commitment is limited, yet these clear variations by factor showcase issues in dire need of remedy. This study, therefore, explored organizational commitment levels and dimensions along with affecting factors among Punjab province higher education institution teachers, investigating a pertinent issue where prior minor work suggests the need for greater exploration. Determining specific causes of lowered teacher commitment can equip universities to enhance it, thereby also improving teacher performance, student outcomes and the calibre of these crucial societal institutions. With sound commitment structure and support, universities can better promote knowledge and speciality via enhanced teacher–student bonds.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study.

1. To probe the teachers' opinions about organizational commitment.
2. To compare the organizational commitment of public and private sector HEIs.

Research Methodology

This descriptive study utilized a survey approach to assess organizational commitment among university faculty in Punjab, Pakistan. The target population included all teaching faculty across 64 public and private general universities in the province. A multistage sampling technique was used to draw the sample. In stage one, one public and one private university were randomly selected from each of Punjab's nine divisions, with an additional private university chosen from the Lahore division. In stage two, seven departments were conveniently sampled from each selected university based on faculty reemployment potential. Lastly, five faculty members were randomly sampled from the seven departments at public universities and six from private universities, generating samples of 315 public sector faculty and 315 private sector faculty. In total, 630 questionnaires were distributed, with 487 completed questionnaires returned, achieving a satisfactory 77% overall response rate. Organizational commitment was measured using a modified version of Meyer and Allen's (1991) Organizational Commitment Scale tailored to the academic context. Data was gathered through online forms, mail, university contacts, and in-person visits.

Findings of the Study

Table 1

Teachers' opinion about affective commitment

Items	Public University Teachers		Private University Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I am willing to do my remaining job at this university.	4.13	0.54	4.11	0.33
I am worried about this university.	2.89	1.07	2.67	0.80
I am not emotionally attached to this university.	3.19	0.93	2.12	1.19
Average Score	3.4	0.85	2.97	0.77

This table presents mean scores and standard deviations for public and private university teachers' self-reported affective commitment. Three questionnaire items assessed aspects of emotional attachment to their university on a rating scale where higher scores indicate stronger agreement. Overall, public

university teachers expressed moderately higher affective commitment (M=3.4, SD=0.85) compared to private university teachers (M=2.97, SD=0.77). Specifically, teachers at both types of universities indicated a similar willingness to continue working at their current institution (public M=4.13; private M=4.11). However, public university teachers reported higher levels of worry (public M=2.89; private M=2.67) and slightly stronger emotional attachment (public M=3.19; private M=2.12) on average.

The data suggests public university teachers have formed somewhat stronger bonds and personal investment with their institutions. In contrast, private university teachers displayed less affective commitment according to these self-report measures, possibly due to higher turnover intentions or more transactional relationships with their employers. Further analysis into organizational culture, leadership, and other predictive factors could provide additional context for understanding these differences in commitment between university types.

Table 2

Teachers' opinion about continuance commitment

Items	Public University Teachers		Private University Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
It would be very difficult for me to leave my job at this university.	4.11	0.74	3.98	0.41
Leaving this university is a matter of concern for me.	4.71	0.83	3.78	0.46
My job at this university is a necessity.	2.82	0.93	2.40	0.97
Average Score	3.88	0.83	3.39	0.61

This table displays mean scores and standard deviations for public and private university teachers' self-reported continuance commitment, reflecting the costs and necessity associated with staying in their jobs. The items were rated on a scale with higher values denoting greater agreement. On average, public university teachers expressed moderately higher continuance commitment (M=3.88, SD=0.83) compared to private university teachers (M=3.39, SD=0.61). In particular, public university teachers indicated it would be more difficult for them to leave their university (public M=4.11; private M=3.98) and that leaving was more of a concern (public M=4.71; private M=3.78). However, both public and private teachers scored similarly in viewing their jobs as a necessity (public M=2.82; private M=2.40). On average, public university teachers expressed moderately higher continuance commitment (M=3.88, SD=0.83) compared to private university teachers (M=3.39, SD=0.61). Public university teachers indicated it would be more difficult for them to leave their university (public M=4.11; private M=3.98) and that leaving was more of a concern (public M=4.71; private M=3.78). However, both public and private teachers scored similarly in viewing their jobs as a necessity (public M=2.82; private M=2.40).

These results suggest public university teachers perceive greater investments, barriers to leaving, and potential costs associated with turnover compared to private university teachers. This points to a mindset oriented around needing to stay among public university faculty. The data indicates private university teachers experience relatively lower pressure to remain in their current jobs. Further analysis of job security, alternatives, and financial considerations would provide additional context around the differences in continuance commitment.

Table 3

Teachers' opinion about normative commitment

Items	Public University Teachers		Private University Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I am obliged to this university.	3.66	0.83	3.22	0.54
I will always remain faithful to this university.	4.20	0.57	4.02	0.34
To serve in this university is my obligation.	2.63	1.02	2.63	0.56
Average Score	3.5	0.81	3.29	0.48

This table shows mean scores and standard deviations for public and private university teachers' self-reported normative commitment, referring to their sense of obligation and loyalty to their university. The items were rated so higher values reflect stronger agreement. On average, public university teachers expressed slightly greater normative commitment (M=3.5, SD=0.81) than private university teachers (M=3.29, SD=0.48). Specifically, public university teachers felt a stronger sense of obligation to their university (public M=3.66; private M=3.22). However, both public and private teachers indicated similar intentions to remain faithful (public M=4.20; private M=4.02) and serve their university out of duty (public M=2.63; private M=2.63).

These results suggest that while public university teachers feel a greater degree of general obligation and responsibility towards their institution, private university teachers display comparable loyalty intentions. It points to a nominal but potentially meaningful difference in the mindsets around needing to reciprocate investment and "give back" to their universities. Further analysis around organizational support, policies, and culture could elucidate reasons behind the slightly elevated normative commitment among public institution faculty.

Table 4

Mean and SD of organizational commitment subscales

Items	Public University Teachers		Private University Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Affective Commitment	3.4	0.85	2.97	0.77
Continuance Commitment	3.88	0.83	3.39	0.61
Normative Commitment	3.5	0.81	3.29	0.48
Overall Organizational Commitment	3.59	0.83	3.22	0.62

This table presents mean scores and standard deviations for public and private university teachers across three subscales of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. It also provides overall organizational commitment scores. Higher mean values indicate stronger agreement and commitment. Overall, public university teachers reported higher organizational commitment (M=3.59, SD=0.83) compared to private university teachers (M=3.22, SD=0.62). Examining the subscales shows that public university teachers expressed greater affective attachment to their university (public M=3.4; private M=2.97), stronger perceived costs and necessity to stay (public continuance M=3.88; private continuance M=3.39), and a higher sense of obligation (public normative M=3.5; private normative M=3.29).

However, the largest difference emerged for continuance commitment, suggesting public university teachers experience more barriers to leaving and belief that they need to remain in their jobs. The smallest gap occurred for normative commitment, indicating private university teachers have a relatively comparable sense of loyalty and duty.

Conclusions

The current study provides evidence that faculty of public universities in Punjab, Pakistan, demonstrate moderately higher overall organizational commitment than private university faculty members. This finding highlights differences in how university teachers view and connect with their institutions depending on whether the university is public or private. Examination of the three components of organizational commitment indicates that the gap between public and private university faculty is most pronounced for continuance commitment. It suggests that public university faculty have a high perception of higher costs and difficulties associated with leaving their positions. Issues such as lack of substitute employment opportunities and financial reliance on one's salary appear most salient for this group. Levels of affective and normative commitment also differ slightly between groups, indicating that public university faculty form closer emotional attachments and feel a greater sense of obligation to their institutions. However, these differences are less pronounced compared to those observed for continuance commitment.

The results show a need for targeted interventions intended to redesign private university faculty's organizational commitment. Improving career growth opportunities, job security, salary, and incentives could decrease turnover intentions among this group. In the meantime, strengthening organizational culture and supportive policies could heighten emotional attachments to private universities. Similarly, for public university faculty members, addressing factors of continuance commitment appears the most impactful for preventing resentment or disengagement. The creation of alternative career pathways, upskilling programs, and financial planning services may positively impact mindsets and beliefs regarding the need to remain in one's position. The current study provides a foundation for policymakers and education leaders to address issues regarding faculty retention and performance in public and private higher education contexts. Additional qualitative research is necessary to explore differences in cultures and lived experiences across university types.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to assess and compare organizational commitment levels among the faculty of public and private universities in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Keeping in view the teachers' mindsets and connections with their institutions holds importance for student outcomes and overall institutional effectiveness (Asrar-ul-Haq et al., 2017). However, limited research has contrasted the commitment patterns in public versus private local contexts. Generally, the results show moderately higher organizational commitment reported by public university teachers as compared to their private sector peers. It is aligned with existing literature showing elevated commitment in public sectors (Andrews et al., 2019), potentially attributable to increased job security assurances.

On the other hand, private universities reflect the engagement levels of profit-driven corporations more closely. Moreover, examining the underpinning bases of commitment, Meyer and Allen (1991) revealed that this difference was largely driven by heightened continuance commitment among the faculty of public universities. Distinguishing greater struggles and scarcity of employment alternatives can engender a "trapped" mindset oriented around needing to retain one's position. In the meantime, the lower though still significant affective and normative commitment among private faculty indicates room for improvement in engendering institutional loyalty. As Jung et al. (2003) noted, career advancement opportunities and leadership relations can enhance teachers' sense of valuation and obligation. Thus, strengthening the bundles of socioemotional and instrumental rewards conferred to professors may better incentivize retention in private setups (Gaytan & McEwen, 2010).

Recommendations

On the basis of current findings and conclusions, the following are the recommendations of the current study.

1. For the private university faculty, there should be implementation of targeted career growth and professional development opportunities to strengthen their affective and normative commitment to their institutions.
2. There should be an increase in job security and incentives/rewards for private university faculty to incentivize retention and reduce turnover intentions.
3. Public universities should be provided with alternative career paths and financial planning services.
4. Organizational culture-building initiatives that increase faculty's sense of belonging and emotional attachment should be developed in private universities.
5. There should be implementation of supportive policies and mentoring programs in both public and private universities to reinforce faculty's perceived organizational support.

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