

**ANTECEDENTS AND PRECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE CONFLICT
AMONG ACADEMICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS IN PAKISTAN**

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INSTITUTIONS IN PAKISTAN

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I dedicate this dissertation to my Sheikh Hazrat Prof. Dr. Fida Muhammad
and my family

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan are consistently witnessing an increased level of conflicts among employees. This increase impacts significantly the culture of the institutions. Furthermore, literature has indicated the importance of organizational culture in reshaping employees' work practices and empowerment, specifically, in relation to the three types of conflicts such as task, process and relationship. However, the relationship of each conflict type with employees' performance is unclear and there have been limited studies to identify antecedents of the conflicts in organizations. Thus, the objectives of this study are to examine the interrelationship of organizational culture, employee empowerment and employee conflict, and its impact on employee performance with moderating role of conflict management. A proportionate random sample of 240 academic staff from HEIs in Pakistan was respondents for the study. Structural equation modeling was used to examine the empirical relationship. Results indicated that HEIs' culture has a negative relationship with employee conflict, and this conflict has a negative relationship with employee's performance. The findings showed that employee empowerment mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee conflict, whilst conflict management moderates the relationship of employee conflict and employee performance. Besides, the study also found that relationship conflict has a negative relationship with employee performance while task conflict has a positive relationship. However, the study did not find any evidence of a relationship between process conflict and employee performance. The results of the current study are helpful for HEIs' management to develop strategies to reduce relationship conflicts by empowering their employees.

ABSTRAK

Institusi Pengajian Tinggi (HEIs) di Pakistan dengan tekal menyaksikan peningkatan tahap konflik dalam kalangan pekerja. Peningkatan ini memberi kesan nyata terhadap budaya institusi tersebut. Selain itu, literatur telah menunjukkan pentingnya budaya organisasi dalam membentuk semula amalan kerja dan pemberian kuasa pekerja, khususnya yang berkaitan dengan tiga jenis konflik, iaitu tugas, proses dan hubungan. Namun begitu, hubungan setiap jenis konflik dengan prestasi pekerja tidak jelas dan terdapat kajian yang terhad untuk mengenal pasti antededen konflik dalam organisasi. Oleh itu, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara budaya organisasi, pemberian kuasa pekerja dan konflik pekerja, dan kesannya ke atas prestasi pekerja dengan peranan pengurusan konflik sebagai penyederhana. Sampel rawak berkadar 240 orang kakitangan akademik daripada HEIs Pakistan merupakan responden kajian ini. Pemodelan persamaan berstruktur digunakan untuk mengkaji hubungan emperikal. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa budaya HEIs mempunyai hubungan negatif dengan konflik pekerja, dan konflik tersebut pula mempunyai hubungan negatif dengan prestasi pekerja. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pemberian kuasa pekerja menjadi pengantara hubungan budaya organisasi dengan konflik pekerja manakala pengurusan konflik menyederhanakan hubungan konflik pekerja dengan prestasi pekerja. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa konflik hubungan mempunyai hubungan negatif dengan prestasi pekerja manakala konflik tugas pula mempunyai hubungan positif. Namun begitu, kajian ini tidak menemukan sebarang bukti hubungan antara konflik proses dengan prestasi pekerja. Hasil kajian semasa ini berguna bagi pihak pengurusan HEIs untuk membangunkan strategi dalam mengurangkan konflik hubungan dengan memberi kuasa kepada pekerja mereka.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJK	-	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance
DAIs	-	Degree Awarding Institutes
EFA	-	Exploratory Factor Analysis
HEC	-	Higher Education Commission
HEIs	-	Higher Education Institutions
HES	-	Higher Education Sector
KMO	-	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
KPK	-	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MSA	-	Measure of Sampling Adequacy
R & D	-	Research and Development
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Major and continued dynamic changes in the social, political, technological and economic environments at global and micro levels create an uncertain and complex environment for organizations to operate. Increasing uncertainty and complexity in the operating environment of organizations provide fertile ground for the onset of conflict at the workplace. Conflict can be defined as a form of disagreement or argument, or an incompatibility in the views, opinions and principles of two or more individuals. Indeed, an increase in the incidence of conflict amongst employees is to be expected due to this dynamic economic, social and political organizational environment (De Dreu and Weingart, 2002). Employee conflict is an area of interest when discussing organizational behaviour and the management of human resources. Employee conflict is important both from the employee perspective as well as the organizational perspective. Conflict has diverse effect on employee performance. Literature indicated that there are different types of conflict with both positive and negative effects on employee performance in an organization (de Wit, Greer, and Jehn, 2012).

A thorough study of the literature pertaining antecedents and precedents of the employee conflicts has exposed few limitations of the existing literature. For example, available literature is mainly divided into two broader research streams. First stream of researchers considers a negative relationship of the conflicts with employee performance and consider uni-dimensionality of the employee conflicts

(DeChurch and Marks, 2001; Aritzeta, Ayestaran, and Swailes, 2005). However, these researchers have ignored the dynamic nature of the conflicts and the causes that originates the employee conflicts. For this reason, another stream of researchers has categorized employee conflicts into task, relationship and process related conflicts to consider the context related factors in the employee conflicts (e.g de Wit et al., 2012; De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu and Beersma, 2005; Pearson *et al.*, 2002; Mortensen and Hinds, 2001; Jehn and Mannix, 2001). These efforts from the researchers have explained the dynamic nature of the conflicts. But still the results of the researchers vary from each other to categorically nominate certain nature of the employee conflicts, its causes and its relationship with employee performance. Thus it is required to further investigate the antecedents and precedents of the employee conflicts.

Contemporary organizations are vulnerable to employees' conflicts. Therefore, organizations are consistently looking for new ideas to manage employee conflicts in order to safeguard the employee performance. In this regard, Sonnentag, Unger, and Nägel (2013) have argued that organizational conflict can be resolved if the causes are identified and solutions are found which accommodate all the parties involved. Indeed, attempting to deal with and/or manage conflict successfully without identifying the causes of such conflict is a lost cause (Havenga, 2004). This illustrates the importance of studying employees' conflicts within their causal chains and consequences.

Most studies highlighted organizational culture as one of the important factors that can cause employees' conflicts at work (Bell, 2007; Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey, 2002; Peeters, Rutte, van Tuijl, and Reymen, 2006a; Peeters, Tuijl, Rutte, and Reymen, 2006b). Culture can cause employee's conflicts either directly or indirectly. Organizational culture is a driving force of contemporary organizations (Daft, 2014). Organizations are looking to regulate employees' behaviours in the workplace through incorporating organizational culture. The employee learns from organizational culture and ultimately behaves in a certain way guided by the culture. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as collective programs that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Foster-

Fishman and Keys (1997) proposed, that the direction of the team members' behaviour is developed by the collective method of understanding that is called organizational culture. Individuals recognize organizational working and behaviour with the help of a blueprint of common principles and attitudes in the organization, which are usually developed through the organizational culture.

Different organizations have different organizational values, actions and behaviours which employees of the organization will share and follow to shape the organizational culture. Organizational culture influences the behaviour of both individuals and teams at the workplace. Hofstede (1991) asserts that people from various cultures bring different codes of behaviour and norms to their workplaces that influence the behaviours of individuals and workgroups in an organizational setting.

According to Foster-Fishman, and Keys, (1997) organizational culture has the tendency to determine the degree of employee empowerment in any organizations. Most bureaucratic organizational culture tends to lead strict organizational hierarchy and low level of employee empowerment (Cummings, & Worley, 2014). Thus, organization culture can instigate task, process or relationship related employee conflict. Organizational culture also impacts upon the overall attributes of employees (Song, Kim, and Kolb, 2009) and determines the degree of employee empowerment at the workplace. Employee empowerment is defined as a process whereby a culture of empowerment is developed, information is shared, autonomy and competency is developed and resources and support are provided. Research has suggested that empowerment is associated with increased job satisfaction (Salazar, Pfaffenberg, and Salazar, 2006) and reduced burnout (Yagil, 2006).

Moreover, the ability of empowered employees to take the initiative and make quicker decisions should result in faster responses. Research also reveals the negative effects of empowerment usually lead to conflict. Crowley, Payne, and Kennedy (2013) found empowerment may lead to conflict in the group setting. This shows the emergence of conflict related to empowerment, as empowerment increases the ability to do tasks and decision power also increases which may result in role

conflict among employees. Mukhtar (2012) argued that Pakistani academia is exposed to a higher level of conflict and hence a study of the causes and consequences of conflict among the employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan is required to address the issue. She further argued that it is also important to test whether the current styles for handling conflicts among the employees of higher education institutions are appropriate enough to handle the situation. This encourages the current study to analyze the background of higher education institutions in Pakistan before examining the relationship of conflict and its consequences.

1.2 Development of Higher Education in Pakistan

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is planning to improve the ranking of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). To date less than 20 percent of the faculty members in Pakistani HEIs hold PhDs, the aim is to triple the number before 2020 (HEC Pakistan, 2013). Also the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan aims to develop the HE sector and plans to have at least 5 universities ranked within the top 300 universities of the world. As a result of various HEC initiatives, six Pakistani universities are now ranked among the top 300 Asian universities while two Pakistani universities are now ranked among the top 300 science and technology institutions of the world.

The Government of Pakistan is making significant investments in developing institutional facilities, introducing new disciplines in cutting-edge and market based technologies, developing human resources including faculties, improving research facilities and student services, creating linkages with local and foreign universities and promoting university-industry interaction, among many others. HEC has been spearheading research in universities which has led to the creation and growth of indigenous knowledge in all academic fields. In addition, the universities in Pakistan have equally responded passionately to all the initiatives taken by HEC towards research and development and many projects have made their presence felt at national and international forum.

The activities of the HEC for the promotion of Research and Development (R&D) encompass the capacity building of researchers and faculty members to support universities in promoting research and the commercialization of research (HEC Pakistan, 2013). HEC implemented programs to attract foreign nationals as well as expatriate Pakistani scientists and engineers in academia and professional organizations to come to Pakistan on short-term assignments (at least for one semester) at public/private sector universities and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs). The interaction between Pakistani universities and their foreign counterparts has opened avenues for future research collaboration and faculty exchanges. This program intends to provide an opportunity for the sharing of expertise and knowledge by the public sector universities and degree awarding institutions with learned expatriates or foreign scholars from reputed universities/research organizations abroad.

The Research and Development Division (R&D) has established 32 academic linkages of Pakistani universities with foreign universities in which researchers, faculty members and PhD scholars from Pakistani public sector universities have been extended opportunities to work in collaboration with foreign scholars (HEC Pakistan, 2013). HEC plans to increase the skill level of the employees of HEI in Pakistan through the capacity development programs and international collaboration, thus resulting in culturally diverse HEIs. In 2014, the number of HEIs increased to 160 in total where 90 are public sector and 70 are private sector.

1.2.1 Current Issues in Higher Education Institutions in Pakistan

During the past decade, the growth of higher education institutions has been prolific. Every passing generation is more receptive to education in Pakistan. Every year, hundreds and thousands of candidates apply and complete their degrees from graduate and undergraduate programmes. Handsome remuneration is being provided according to HEC rules in public and private sector universities and degree awarding institutions (Hyder and Reilly, 2005). Clearly defined policies have attracted

individuals to adopt teaching as profession to excel their career. These trends have made the education sector an attractive profession for highly educated people.

Concurrently, increased job capacity in the education sector has increased competition in the academia, as a result faculty members are doing postgraduate and doctorate studies in national and international universities to improve their professional qualification and skills (Husain, 2005). Likewise, faculty members are now taking an interest in research activities and hundreds of research output has been published nationally and internationally every year. Moreover, international collaborations of faculty and researcher also have been increased. Thus, research productivity of university has been increased exponentially due to the interest of faculty members in research activities. According to Smeenk, Teelken, Eisinga, and Doorewaard (2008) productivity is measured by research output and ability to deliver lectures. This sense of emerging competition in the higher education institutions of Pakistan led the foundations of so many challenges for the HEIs. Advanced scholarly competences and talents may create conflicts in organization. Higher academic performance, in terms of research output and teaching abilities during the year, brings higher monetary and nonmonetary outcome for the faculty members. Higher intellectual capabilities and skills can lead to conflicts among employees. Employee conflicts could be task related, process related or personality related.

1.3 Problem Statement

In the last decade, the higher education sector in Pakistan has gone through many fundamental changes. Firstly, the Higher Education Commission was established as University Grant Commission was found to be less effective in promoting higher education. The government funds for the promotion of higher education have been increased as a result the number of higher education institutions (public and private) increase. It has been observed that professional and qualified teacher's retention has become a challenge for higher education institutions in Pakistan as the turnover rate has increased significantly in recent years. According to Ali (2008) employee turnover rate in HEIs Pakistan is more than 60% on average.

This figure has increased recent year due to highly competitive environment (Ahmad, Fakhr, Shah and Zaman (2010).

Several factors have been reported over the years that affect the employee's turnover and performance in the higher education institutions of the Pakistan. However, most of the studies have been focused on the level of satisfaction, commitment and rewards (Haider et al., 2015; Yousef, 2017). Somehow an important issue of the employee conflict in this domain remained overlooked. Employee conflict is a situation of disagreement between two or more individuals at workplace. If it is not managed well it can lead to some unwanted events in the HEI's of Pakistan and also has permanent effects on the employee performance and induced turnover intention. Recently, Higher education institutions have experienced extremist activities which happened in Karachi and Mardan due to unmanaged conflicts (Dawn, 2017). Several incidents of same nature have been reported throughout the recent years. This clearly implies that HEI's in Pakistan failed to manage employee conflicts. Top ranking business schools of Pakistan according to the university rankings of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, are unable to instil acceptability, tolerance, freedom of expression, and difference of opinion (Abdullah and Saeed, 2016).

Employee conflicts are a widespread phenomenon in organizational behaviour. Empirical research has shown that employees who experience employee conflicts suffer from strain symptoms (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, and Dijkstra, 2004) such as depression (Spector and Jex, 1998), burnout (Richardson, Burke, and Leiter, 1992), somatic complaints (Frone, 2000) and many other negative effects. Thus, employee conflict may constitute a serious threat to employee performance. Despite this empirical evidence, crucial questions remain unanswered. Firstly, most studies on the association between employee conflict and performance used rather general measures of conflict and did not differentiate task conflict and relationship conflict. For example Alper, Tjosvold, and Law (2000), Porter and Lilly (1996), Huston and Marquis (2006), DeChurch and Marks (2001) considered conflict as a unidimensional construct and did not discussed different types of the conflicts in

their studies. Due to these limitations their studies were not able to tract the differentiation between different types of the conflict in their findings.

Previously, employee conflicts were considered as a reason for negative synergy between groups and teams. Past studies have ignored positive possible impact of employee conflict on employee performance (DeChurch and Marks, 2001; Aritzeta, Ayestaran, and Swailes, 2005). Jehn and Mannix (2001) argued that employee conflicts are dynamic in nature and it is not justified to study the concept only with its negative effect. Further, they categorized employee conflicts into task and relationship conflicts and found positive nature of task conflict and negative nature of relationship conflicts. Further, Martínez-Moreno, González-Navarro, Zornoza and Ripoll (2009) included another type of employee conflict, i.e. named process conflicts. These types have adverse effect on the employee performance and are more important with respect to the HEIs in Pakistan. According to Shah, (2013) HEIs in Pakistan is experiencing the transition phase as most institutions are focusing on the internationalization of the HEIs. This required higher level of employee efforts and multidimensional skills. However, internationalization of HEIs has also posed higher level of task, relationship and process conflict among employees that needs to be managed at priority basis. Unfortunately, there are not many studies about employee conflict in HEIs of Pakistan. Until now very little knowledge about the specific effect of task, process and relationship conflict on employee performance is available in general (De Dreu *et al.*, 2004; Sonnentag *et al.*, 2013) and specifically within HEIs of Pakistan (Mukhtar, 2012). This paucity of research is unfortunate, because the use of overall conflict measures may mask the differences in the patterns for task, process and relationship conflict.

The differentiation between task, process and relationship conflict has been proved useful with respect to its impact on employee performance (Way, Jimmieson, and Bordia, 2014; Curşeu and Schreijer, 2010; de Wit *et al.*, 2012; Gamero, González-Romá, and Peiró, 2008). Research also indicated the role of conflict management strategies in order to moderate the role of employee conflict and employee performance. There are several conflict management strategies available that can be utilized according to the personality and situation to mitigate the impact

of the employee conflict on employee performance. Extensive literature is available that studied the impact of these strategies on employee performance. Thus, the current study investigates the relationship of employee conflict and employee performance along with the moderating role of conflict management strategies.

It remains largely unanswered whether the association between employee conflict and impaired performance holds for all employees and under all circumstances. There is evidences of different factors (i.e., personality, environment, and job position) that can affect the relationship between employee conflicts and employee performance (Dijkstra, van Dierendonck, and Evers, 2005; Spector and Bruk-Lee, 2008). However, some factors (like, empowerment and commitment) are still unexplored (De Dreu and Beersma, 2005). The study of an organization's culture is important for the implementation of an organization's strategy. Employees play a key role in achieving an organization's goals and in gaining an edge over competitors in today's competitive environment. The organizational culture directly affects an employee's attitude like, motivation (Alvesson, 2012; Hartnell, Ou, and Kinicki, 2011; Hon and Leung, 2011; Pinder, 2014), job satisfaction (Azanza, León, and Alonso, 2013; Robbins, Judge, Millett, and Boyle, 2013; Tsai, 2011), organizational commitment (Cummings and Worley, 2014; Gutierrez, Candela, and Carver, 2012; Hartnell *et al.*, 2011; Klein, Becker, and Meyer, 2012) and conflicts (Hatch and Zilber, 2012; Huhtala, Tolvanen, Mauno, and Feldt, 2014; Korkmaz, Kılıç, Yücel, and Aksoy, 2014; Martin and Frost, 2011; Nica, 2013).

Organizational culture can be defined as a way of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially attached values (Thomas and Peterson, 2014). The debate on organizational culture and employee conflict relationship is still unclear due to two major reasons. Firstly, researchers agree on the negative relationship of the HEI culture and employee conflict (Brørby, 2013; Foster-Fishman and Keys, 1997; Hartnell *et al.*, 2011). However, these studies are limited in scope and considered conflict in general while other types of the employee conflicts have been ignored largely. Secondly, the HEI culture was also measured

through specific set of culture characteristics and broader scope of HEI culture was ignored. For example Brørby (2013) viewed the dynamic nature of employee conflicts by dividing it into process and structural conflicts. However, his study did not focused on the different types of the culture that caused employee conflicts. Also studies on the relationship of the organizational culture and employee conflict are rare (De Dreu and Beersma, 2005). Limited efforts have been made by the researchers to explore the relationship of different dimensions of organizational culture and employee conflicts (Mukhtar, 2012). Thus, current study focuses on the impact of culture on the employee's conflicts to fill this gap.

Organizational culture is a source for many other employee related phenomena like empowerment (Klein *et al.*, 2012; Martin and Frost, 2011). Employee empowerment results from the employee's environment interaction at workplace. It provides an employee sense of control over their work. Organizational culture provides an excellent framework for understanding and assessing the person-environment fit needed for empowerment to succeed within an organization. Organizational culture refers to the shared system of meaning that guides organizational members' believing, thinking, perceiving and feeling, ultimately directing their behavior (Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey, 2013). Thus, an empowerment initiative is more likely to succeed when the organizational culture contains, or changes to create, the critical conditions needed for empowerment (Appelbaum, Karasek, Lapointe, and Quelch, 2015).

There have been several studies researching the cultural effects on different employees' outcomes (Alvesson, 2012; Azanza *et al.*, 2013; Cummings and Worley, 2014; Gutierrez *et al.*, 2012; Hartnell *et al.*, 2011; Hatch and Zilber, 2012; Hon and Leung, 2011; Huhtala *et al.*, 2014; Klein *et al.*, 2012; Korkmaz *et al.*, 2014; Martin and Frost, 2011; Nica, 2013; Pinder, 2014; Robbins, Chatterjee, and Canda, 2011; Tsai, 2011). However, there has been very little research focusing specifically on employee empowerment within a single firm setting. Empowerment has become very popular within organization for its perceived benefits. However, it might be much more difficult to practice empowerment when workforce value empowerment differently. Furthermore, the concept of empowerment may also be perceived

differently depending on the employee's level in an organization. This study, therefore, investigates the potential existence of any relationship between organizational culture and employee empowerment.

However, few researchers argued that this relationship is not direct. There are some intervening factors that lead to employee conflict within an HEI setting (Brørby, 2013; Higazee, 2015). Through review of relevant literature exposed that limited literature is available which explored these intervening factors that mediate the relationship between the HEI culture and employee conflict. The degree of employee control and contribution in the decision making process is prominent factor that can mediate the relationship between culture and employee conflicts (Higazee, 2015). Thus, the field is still open to study the relationship between different dimensions of HEI culture and employee conflicts. The current study explores the mediation effect of employee empowerment between the relationship of HEI culture and employee conflict. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) is encouraging the faculties of higher education institutions in Pakistan to enhance research output in order to create a highly intellectual culture. This will lead to a competitive HEI environment that apparently results in conflicts among employees, i.e. from the perspective of task, process or relationship. Thus, there is a dire need to study the causes and consequences under which employees' conflicts emerge and how they affect the employees' performance.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study established four objectives on the basis of the above discussion. These objectives are:

- a) To investigate the relationship of organizational culture and employee conflicts among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan.
- b) To investigate the mediating role of employee empowerment on the relationship of organizational culture and employee conflicts among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan.

- c) To investigate the relationship between employee conflicts and employee performance among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan.
- d) To investigate the moderating effect of conflict management between the relationship of employee conflicts and employee performance among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan.

1.5 Research Questions

The problem statement leads the researcher to formulate the following research questions:

- a) What is the relationship of organizational culture and employee conflicts among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan?
- b) Does employee empowerment mediate the relationship of organizational culture and employee conflicts among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan?
- c) What is the relationship between employee conflicts and employee performance among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan?
- d) What is the moderating effect of conflict management between the relationship of employee conflicts and employee performance among employees of higher education institutions in Pakistan?

1.6 Research Scope

The current study aims to investigate the relationship of HEI culture with different types of employee conflicts with mediating role of employee empowerment and its impact on employee performance. The study also investigated the mediating role of the conflict management strategies. Thus the scope of the study consisted on

the constructs of organizational culture, employee empowerment, employee conflicts, conflict management strategies and employee performance among the employee of HEIs Pakistan. Further organizational culture was divided into four dimensions. These dimensions are clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy culture and employee conflicts were consist on these different types of conflicts. These are task conflict, relationship conflict and process conflicts.

The main scope of present research is HEIs in Pakistan. There are 160 HEIs currently operating in Pakistan under the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan. Currently, 70 private higher education Institutions are operating in Pakistan. Similarly 90 public sector institutions are operating in Pakistan. Table 1.1 shows region wise, the number of HEIs in Pakistan. There are 24 public and 6 private sector institutions in the Federal area, the Punjab province has 42 as the total number of higher education institutions, the Sindh province has 46, while the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province has 29, Balochistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) have 7 and 6 respectively.

Table 1.1: Number of Public and Private Sector Higher Education Institutions by Region.

Region	Public Sector	Private Sector	Total
Federal	24	6	30
Punjab	20	22	42
Sindh	17	29	46
KPK	19	10	29
Balochistan	6	1	7
AJK	4	2	6
TOTAL	90	70	160

The current study primarily focused on full time academic staff of 160 HEIs in Pakistan. Furthermore, the academic staff is divided into designations. These designations are lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors and professors.

1.7 Research Significance

The current study provided significant contribution in both theoretical and managerial perspective. From the theoretical perspective this study helps in understanding the social exchange theory in the context of the employee conflicts, provides insights of the employee relationship in different cultural contexts. Four different types of the organizational culture were conceptualized within the study theoretical framework. It helps to extend the growing body of literature in organizational behaviour, strategic management and conflict studies. Furthermore, social exchange theory explains the nature of relationship between the employees at workplace. This study extends the social exchange theory and its implementation under the different types of the employee's conflicts to explain the social exchange between the employees with respect to different types of the conflicts.

The findings of the study helps in bridge the gap in literature by examining different types of the employees' conflicts in the organizational context. Previously most of the study considered the general measures of the employee conflicts and most of the time conflicts were conceptualized as negative construct that produces the negative synergy and lower the employee performance. However, recent researchers has rejected these concepts of the employee conflicts and agreed on different types of the employee conflicts and it is not mandatory the conflict always lower the performance. However, the empirical evidences to proof this claims were not enough. Thus, this study is extending efforts in empirically testing the relationship of different types of the employee conflicts with performance.

Furthermore, the study focuses on the precedents and antecedents of conflicts among employees in organizational settings through the comprehensive model involving organizational culture and employee empowerment. Previous studies on conflicts either tested the impact of conflicts on the employees' performance or tested the causes of employees' conflicts. Some studies also relate organizational culture to the origin of conflicts among employees (Way *et al.*, 2014; Curşeu and Schrujjer, 2010; Puck and Pregernig, 2014).

Some researchers highlighted the impact of employees' empowerment on conflicts (Congress and Kung, 2012; Pines, Rauschhuber, Cook, Norgan, Canchola, Richardson, and Jones, 2014; Pines, Rauschhuber, Norgan, Cook, Canchola, Richardson, and Jones, 2012). The novelty of the current study is to analyze the effect of organizational culture on employee conflicts either directly or indirectly. The study aims to address the consequences of conflicts among employees, which ultimately leads to an effect on employee performance. The study also investigates the importance of conflict management tactics to mitigate the impact of conflicts on employee performance.

From a practical perspective, the study contributes to a management's insights on how conflicts among employees emerge in the organizational setting. It can also help managers to utilize appropriate strategies to build an organizational culture where employees adopt methods and work practices which reduce the chances of the occurrence of conflicts among employees. Mostly, HEIs own a highly skilled workforce. These skills can cause employees' conflicts, if not managed properly. These conflicts can produce either positive or negative effects on employee performance. The study is helpful for the management to understand the relationship of the organizational culture, employee empowerment, employee conflicts and their impact on employee performance. The results of this study will enable the academic managers to understand the nature of employee conflict and their relationship with employee performance and causes of the conflict. This information further could be used to develop a policy in order to optimize the level of conflict among employees of HEI in Pakistan.

1.8 Conceptual and Operational Definitions

An operational definition defines something (a variable, term or object) in terms of the specific process or set of validation tests used to determine its presence and quantity. That is, one defines something in terms of the operations that count as measuring it. The term was coined by Flannelly, Jankowski, and Flannelly (2014), and is a part of the process of operationalization. One might use definitions that rely

on operations in order to avoid the troubles associated with attempting to define things in terms of some intrinsic essence. Below are the operational definitions of the study variables.

1.8.1 Organizational Culture

Conceptual: Organizational culture refers to the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another. This includes shared beliefs, values and practice that distinguish one organization from another (Hofstede, 1980). Organizational culture is composed of shared belief, values and norms among employees within a work place.

Operational: The study operationalized the construct organizational culture on the basis of organizational focus criteria to measure the nature of the culture prevailing in the organization. These criteria are mainly based on four dimensions of the culture named clan culture, hierarchy culture, market culture and adhocracy (Cameron and Quinn, 2005), each dimension of the culture is consist of the 6 items based on the different characteristics of the organizational culture provided by the Cameron and Quinn, (2005). **Clan Culture** focuses on internal preservation and elasticity, care for own employees and for clients. It is family like well knitted and goal oriented. The leader is like a mentor. Cooperation, cohesiveness and faithfulness are appreciated (Cameron and Quinn, 2005; Shafiq and Qureshi, 2014). **Hierarchy Culture** concentrates on the internal preservation with a need for solidity and control with formal standards, procedures and rules (Garland, 2002). **Innovative Culture** is focused on external positioning with a high degree of elasticity and freedom with high sense of entrepreneurship where teams are created and dismissed with the new assignments (Hyland and Beckett, 2005). **Market Culture** is focused on external protection with the requirement of steadiness and power and concentrated on the earning profit from the market competition. Success (Aktaş, Çiçek, and Kıyak, 2011; Cameron and Quinn, 1999; Mohammadi, Yeganeh, and Rad, 2010)

1.8.2 Employee Empowerment

Conceptual: Employees' empowerment is defined as an individual's cognitive state of mind which is characterized by a sense of perceived control, perceived competence and goal internalization (Menon, 2001).

Operational: Employee empowerment is a process in which competent, self-motivated and committed individuals expend high levels of effort, initiative and persistence in accomplishing their tasks. The study measured the construct on the basis of sub dimensions of perceived control, perceived competence and goal internalization (Menon, 2001).

1.8.3 Employee Conflict

Conceptual: Conflict is broadly defined as misunderstanding by the parties involved or discrepancies, conflicting wishes and interpersonal inappropriateness (Boulding, 1962). Mack and Snyder (1957) p. 212 defined conflict as a "particular kind of social interaction process between parties who have mutually exclusive or incompatible values".

Operational: Employees' conflicts are the disagreements among employees of an organization either due to work related or personality related issues. This study considers three major types of conflict to measure the construct. These types are task conflict, relationship conflict and process conflict (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). **Relationship conflict** refers to the situation where employee has interpersonal incompatibilities due to difference of opinion on the basis of religion, politics and fashion etc. **Task conflict** is the difference of opinion among the employees about the method of doing some task and **Process conflict** is the difference of opinion about means of as task (Jehn and Mannix, 2001).

1.8.4 Conflict Management

Conceptual: Conflict management refers to the methods to deal with the conflict. Literature identified many methods or mechanisms to handle conflicts but there is no consensus among researchers as to which is most appropriate (De Dreu and Beersma, 2005).

Operational: This study uses five types of conflict management grid based on the concern for self and concern for others. These types are yielding, avoiding, forcing, problem solving and compromising (De Dreu and Van Vianen, 2001). **Yielding** refers to the situation where the conflict is resolved through low concern for self and high concern for other party. **Avoiding** refers to the situation where the conflict is resolved through low concern for self and low concern for other party. **Forcing** refers to the situation where the conflict is resolved through high concern for self and low concern for other party. **Problem solving** refers to the situation where the conflict is resolved through high concern for self and high concern for other party. **Compromising** refer to the situation in conflict management where both parties are in compromising situation and find a middle ground to solve the problem (De Dreu and Van Vianen, 2001).

1.8.5 Employee Performance

Conceptual: Employee performance refers to the behaviours under the control of an individual that advance the goals of an organization (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002).

Operational: The current study measures the construct on the basis of task related performance and the contextual performance of employees (Ahmad and Schroeder, 2003).

1.9 Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into five chapters. It is organized as introduction, literature review, research methodology, results and conclusion. In Chapter One, the research background, the study setting and problem statement are outlined. This is followed by the study purpose, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter two provides a literature review of different research streams that are pertinent to the formulation of the research model. The bulk of this chapter consists of an extensive review of human resource management, organizational behavior and organizational design literature. Chapter 2 started with the review of literature on the employee conflicts. Literature review chapter ends with the identification of the gaps in the literature that provided the rationale for the study. On the basis of these gaps, hypothesis of the current study has been formulated to achieve its objective.

Chapter 3 details the methods used to conduct research that aims to develop a model that explains the interrelationships between employee conflicts, employee empowerment, organizational culture and employee performance. The research design (i.e. unit of analysis, key respondent, target sample frame, sample size and survey administration) is explained first. The next section provides details of the measurement model, along with a discussion of their underlying structure. The last section contains the methods used for measurement and structural validation.

Chapter 4 aims to examine the research hypotheses. The collected data was processed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 for Windows and AMOS for Structural Equation modeling version 21 for Windows in three different stages. At first stage initial data screening was done through analyzing missing data, outliers and normality. After the initial data screening common method bias and non-response bias was tested. The third stage was to use SEM for measurement model and structural model validation. During the measurement model the convergent and discriminant validity was tested. Structural models were used to test the hypothesized relationships of the current study.

Chapter 5 provides the discussion on the findings of the study. The chapter starts with the highlights of the research process adopted for the current study. Next section focused on the discussion of the each objective of the study and provides thorough discussion on the findings of the study. Furthermore, theoretical, managerial and empirical implications of the study are provided in the next section, followed by the limitation and future recommendations. Last section of the current study concludes the results and provides revised frame work of the study.

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