

Mediating Effect of Depression between Loneliness and Organizational Commitment

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Abstract: The main aim of the study is to investigate the mediating effect of depression on the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment among the faculty members of university district Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Loneliness has become one of the most important problems of our time. Loneliness can be seen not only in daily life but also in the workplace. Loneliness in the workplace has many negative effects on both employees and organizations. The sample of the study was 252, collected through closed-ended questionnaires from faculty members of the Higher Education Sector. The findings of the study explored there is a negative direct relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment. Moreover, a positive relationship was found between loneliness and depression. In addition, depression fully mediates the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment. This study will also contribute to the relevant theories used in the current research. At last, in the current study, the researcher recommended further studies and implications of the study.

Keywords: Loneliness, Organizational Commitment, Depression, Faculty members

1. Introduction

Loneliness is considered a global problem, which is experienced by everyone. Research shows that feeling lonely in the workplace becomes a major issue, which is growing day by day (Lam, Lau, Chung, & Pang, 2012). Loneliness is an unpleasant feeling that affects an employee's organizational commitment (Ayazlar & Güzel, 2014). Similarly, loneliness and happiness both are negatively correlated to each other. In the same way, individual suffering from loneliness is less happy and bears more symptoms of depression (Steptoe, Shankar, Demakakos, & Wardle, 2013). Loneliness is one of the important risk factors for depression. Studies like Christiansen Larsen, and Lasgaard, (2016) and Hawkey, Masi, Berry and Cacioppo (2006) concluded that forty (40) percent of employees having age

more than 65 years were reported to be lonely and loneliness increases as the age increases (Doane & Thurston, 2014). Furthermore, the study elaborates that lonely people cannot deal with the difficulties they experience in their lives. Moreover, the affected people live a useless, meaningless and aimless life. In simple loneliness negatively affects the productivity of an individual in daily life as well as at the workplace.

Depression was the fourth most frequent psychological disease in the world; however, it is expected in 2022, depression will become the second most frequent psychological problem (Miranda & Scopetta, 2018). Depression is one of the most critical health issues that affect not only employees' performance but also changes society (Mui, 1996). According to Lerner *et al.* (2004) study, there is a clear difference between depressed and non-depressed employees.

Organizational commitment is a kind of bond between both the organization and employees, which turns down the employees' quitting rate of the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Faisal Khan, Khan, Naz, & Khan, 2017; Faisal Khan, Khan, Naz, & Rasli, 2016). According to Greenberg *et al.* (Greenberg *et al.*, 2003), organizational commitment is known as the degree to which employees are connected to the organization and want to remain connected as organizational members. Furthermore, organizational commitment is all about an individual's own wish to commit or to leave the organization (F. Khan, Nisar, & Malik, 2020; Meyer, Stanley, & Parfyonova, 2012). Moreover, organizational commitment is described as an employee's psychological state, which describes the relationship of employees who work with the organization (Patiar & Wang, 2016).

Loneliness is a common problem among employees, and researchers in developed countries investigated that loneliness is associated with psychological health and depression (Cheng, Zhao, Wang, & Sun, 2019; Swader, 2019). Furthermore, loneliness not only affects employees' feelings but also their commitment to regarding the organization. In simple, loneliness is having an inverse impact on employees of the organization. The employees are dissatisfied with life and harm both mental and physical health as well as its effects leaning of employees (Dyrbye, Thomas, & Shanafelt, 2006; Hawkey, *et al.*, 2006). Depression and loneliness both are highly related to each other in different sectors. Loneliness can be considered a symptom of depression (Osamika & Ojasanya, 2019).

1.1 Objectives

On the bases of the above discussion, the following objectives have been formulated.

1. To examine the effect of loneliness on depression and organizational commitment among the faculty members of universities in Swabi district Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.
2. To find the mediating effect of depression on the relationship between loneliness with organizational commitment among the faculty members of universities in Swabi district Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

According to Barsade and Gibson (2007), loneliness not only affects employees' feelings but also their commitment to an organization. In simple, loneliness is having an inverse impact on employees of the organization. The employees are dissatisfied with life and harm both mental and physical health as well as its effects leaning on employees (Ellwardt, Wittek, Hawkey, & Cacioppo, 2020; Hawkey, *et al.*, 2006). Loneliness is linked with increased blood pressure, higher cholesterol levels, and depression (Courtin & Knapp, 2017; Hawkey, *et al.*, 2006).

Loneliness is a situation where an employee faces difficulty in communicating with others in the workplace (Khosravi, Rezvani, & Wiewiora, 2016; Şar, Göktürk, Tura, & Kazaz, 2012). Both males and females experience loneliness, different researchers have different views, regarding the loneliness of

males and females, some suggest males have higher lonelier than females(Tümkiye, Aybek, & Çelik, 2008), and Some concluded that females have more alone than males (Bugay 2007), while few suggested that no difference have been found. The literature review proved that people with loneliness bear a low level of life satisfaction and organizational commitment (Swami, 2017).

The researchers concluded that satisfied and not depressed employees have high productivity, efficiency, and decreased failures (Greene, et al., 2017). Furthermore, the researcher elaborated that early identification of depression in employees is crucial for their strong organizational commitment (Shani & Pizam, 2009).

Lonelier employees have a high level of job satisfaction and a positive relationship was found between organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In addition, a negative relationship is found between loneliness and organizational commitment. Furthermore, Yousefi and Moghadam (2014) investigated the relationship between commitment identity and assertiveness with students' sense of loneliness in Iran. The study consists of a discussion on loneliness, identity commitment and Assertiveness. The results show that identity commitment is effective in loneliness. Moreover, women were found to be more committed as compared to men(Hakanena, Schaufelib, & Aholaa, 2008).

Kim, Kim, and Chul Yang (2015) studied the depression scale he found that more women are found to be in depression as compared to men.Akçit and Barutçu (2018) examined loneliness, workplace, performance and academicians in Turkey. Furthermore, he explored that there is a negative relationship between workplace loneliness and performance.Ertosuna and Erdil (2012) studied the impacts of depression on workers' responsibility and aim to leave. The discoveries of the examination show that dejection in the working environment is a negative factor. Furthermore, loneliness affects employee performance and decreases the commitment level of an employee.

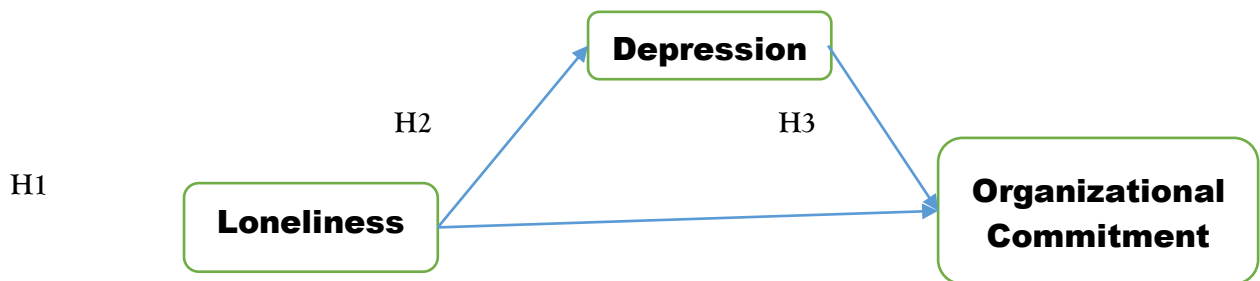


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

- H1:** There is an effect of loneliness on organizational commitment.
- H2:** There is an effect of loneliness on depression.
- H3:** There is an effect of depression on organizational commitment.
- H4:** Depression mediates the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment.

3. Research Methodology

A population is a whole group of an individual, objects, events and things (U. Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Moreover, the population for the current study is the faculty of universities of HES located in the region of Swabi Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. There are three universities of HES located in the district Swabi. According to khan et al, (2019) the sample is a subset of a population. Furthermore, sampling is the process of choosing a small part of the population for measurement. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), in the current research, the number of samples is 252 from a population of 697.

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Furthermore, probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two distinct kinds of sampling strategies. In probability sampling, every component of the population has an equivalent and freedom possibility of determination (Khan., Rasli, Yusoff, & Ahmad, 2015; Kumar, Sakthivel, Ramanathan, & Management, 2015). Then again, in non-probability sampling, every element of the population has an inconsistent possibility of choice. In the current study, the probability sampling method is used to choose the study respondents.

For the current research, the information was gathered through various sources; a secondary source has been utilized from past research contemplates, i.e., writing, and literature. The secondary data is gathered from journals, articles, and books. The data is effectively accessible, and the source will be utilized as secondary information (Faisal Khan, Khan, Kanwal, & Bukhair, 2018; Sekaran, 2003). The secondary data is acquired effectively, quickly, and lesser costly than primary data. The questionnaire survey was utilized to assemble primary information that is otherwise called a self-administrated study. The primary information is utilized for the first from various sources. In the current research, primary data will be utilized to assemble through a questionnaire. In the current study closed-ended survey, is used to gather information. This survey consists of 56 questions. Furthermore, respondents have been given the alternatives to rate their reactions on a 5-point Likert scale.

4. Data Analysis

The total population of the current study is 697. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the number of samples for 697 is 252. A total number of 300 questionnaires were distributed among the faculty members of HES. Furthermore, 261 were received and 9 of them were found incomplete. Therefore, the final sample size of 252 is taken for completing the current research. Thus, the response rate was 84%.

Table 1. Demographic Information

	Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	178	70.6
	Female	74	29.4
Marital status	Single	84	33.3
	Married	147	58.3
	Divorced	14	5.6
	Separate	7	2.8
Position	Lecturer	114	45.2
	Assistant Professor	110	43.7
	Associate Professor	17	6.7
	Professor	11	4.4
Term of employment	Contract	134	53.2
	Permanent	118	46.8

The 252 respondents of total focused populations were chosen from the employees of HES of region Swabi Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Table 1 shows that the respondents were both male and female, as referenced in the table. Table 1 unveils that 70.6% are male and 29.4% are female.

As per the gathered information Table, 1 shows that 12.7% of respondents have age under 25 while 35.7% of respondents have the age between 26 to 30. Furthermore, 35.7% of respondents have aged between 31 to 35. At last, 12.9% of respondents have the age between 36 to 40, and 2.0% of

respondents have the age over 40. Besides, Table 1 unveils that 33.3% of members are single, 58.3% are married, 5.6% are divorced and 2.8% are isolated.

Table 1 shows that 45.2% of absolute respondents are lecturers, 43.7% are assistant professors, 6.7% are associate professors and 4.4 are a professor. Moreover, Table 1 shows that there are 20.2% of total respondents have a master's degree, 41.3% have MS/ MPhil degree, 36.1% have a Ph.D., and 2.4% have a degree of post-Doctorial. Also, Table 1 uncovers that 43.2% of participants have experienced below 3 years, 49.2% have experienced between 4 to 6, 4.0% have experienced between 7 to 9, 2.4% have experienced between 10 to 12, and 1.2 have experienced more than 12 years. At last, table 1 shows that 53.2% of respondents are on a contract basis and 46.8% are permanent.

4.1 Descriptive Statistic

Descriptive statistics are used for averages and other statistical calculations like Mean, Median, Range, and Standard Deviation. Descriptive statistics quantitatively clarify the highlights of the information gathered. In Table 2, the primary segment is the names of the factors are loneliness, depression, and organizational commitment. The subsequent segment gives us an estimation of the mean, which clarify the central tendency of every one of the variable. The third section presents the standard deviation. At last, the fourth column provides the number of respondents; in this case number of respondents is 252.

Table 2: The Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Loneliness	252	3.1758	0.59835
Depression	252	2.8331	0.58523
Organizational Commitment	252	3.0893	0.63717

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The consistency of a variable is known as reliability. In the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha value was used to check the reliability Each factor in the current research has different reliability. Table 3 shows that the loneliness Cronbach's Alpha value is .806, which was measured by using 20 items. Furthermore, .815 is the value of Cronbach's Alpha for depression that was measured by 9 items (shown in table 3). Moreover, the organizational commitment Cronbach's Alpha value is .771 and was measure by 18 items.

4.3 Testing Hypotheses

H1: There is an effect of loneliness on organizational commitment.

According to Pearson correlation, the outcomes that appeared in Table 3, exhibited a significant negative connection between loneliness and organizational commitment ($r = -0.286$).

Table 3: Relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment

	Loneliness	Depression	Organizational Commitment
Loneliness	0.80		-
Depression	0.766**	0.81	
Organizational Commitment	-0.286**	0.362**	0.77

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

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Furthermore, Table 4, the R square worth, shows the adjustment in the observed variable that is clarified by the explanatory variable. Moreover, 0.082 is the value of R square, which means that an 8.2% change in organizational commitment is explained by loneliness. The table shows that the F value is 22.23, which means the model is a good fit for data. The beta value of loneliness is -0.286, which is significant and harms organizational commitment. Hence, H1 is satisfied and accepted.

Table 4: Model summary for Loneliness and Organizational Commitment

Model	Organizational Commitment	
	Standardized Beta	t
Constant	-	19.447
Loneliness	-0.286**	-4.716
R square	0.082	
F-model	22.23	
Depression		
	Standardized Beta	t
Constant	-	7.958
Loneliness	.766**	18.845
R square	.587	
F-model	355.12	
Organizational Commitment		
	Standardized Beta	t
Constant	-	22.662
Depression	-0.362**	-6.148
R square	.131	
F-model	37.79	

- a. Predictor: loneliness
 - b. Dependent variable: organizational commitment
- ** is significant at a 0.01 level (2-tailed)

H2: There is an effect of loneliness on depression.

The results shown in Table 4 demonstrated a positive and significant way from loneliness to depression ($r= 0.766$). Furthermore, Table shows that the R square worth shows the adjustment in the observed variable that is clarified by the explanatory variable. The R square worth is 0.587, which implies that a 58.7% change in depression is explained by loneliness. The table shows that the F value is 355.12, which means the model is a good fit for data. The beta value of loneliness is 0.766, which is significant and has a positive effect on depression. Hence, H2 is satisfied and accepted.

H3: There is an effect of depression on organizational commitment.

The results shown in Table 4, demonstrated negative and significant paths from depression to organizational commitment ($r = -0.362$). Furthermore, the R square worth shows the adjustment in the observed variable that is clarified by the explanatory variable. The R square worth is 0.131, which implies that a 13.1% change in depression, is explained by organizational commitment. Table 9 displays that the F value is 37.795, which means the model is a good fit for data. The beta value of depression is -0.362, which is significant and harms organizational commitment. Hence, H3 is satisfied and accepted.

H4: Depression mediates the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment.

To check mediation, the researcher used the four main steps of Baron and Kenny (1986). The first three steps of Baron and Kenny were satisfied in Table 4. Furthermore, to check the fourth step of Baron and Kenny of mediation depression was added as a mediator, the direct relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment becomes insignificant and the indirect relationship remains significant (shown in table 10). When the direct relationship becomes insignificant, it means there is full mediation. Moreover, the result is also supported by the Sobel test. Hence, hypothesis H4 is proved right and accepted.

Table 5: Mediation fourth step of the analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta		
Constant	-	20.301	.000
Loneliness	-0.020	-0.216	.829
Depression	-0.347	-3.779	.000

Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study will help the higher education sector to decrease the level of loneliness and depression, and it will help to increase the commitment level of an employee toward the organization. It is found that as the level of loneliness increases, the level of depression will be increased. An employee suffering from loneliness also bears different symptoms of depression. Furthermore, the result concluded that an employee suffering from loneliness at the workplace harms their commitment level to the organization. The outcomes of this current study revealed a negative relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment, i.e., if the employee's loneliness level increases, it diminishes the organizational commitment level. Moreover, the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment was fully mediated through depression.

The current study will be productive for the researchers that can use the results of the study for their future research. Furthermore, it also contributes to the body of literature. Moreover, the research study will be helpful for the individual to reduce their loneliness ultimately decreasing their depression level and increasing their commitment level to their organization. In last, the study will be helpful for the policymakers, especially in the Higher Education Sector, for making employees friendly policies through which the employee's depression level decreases and organizational commitment increases. The study will save time and money for the government to revise and reformulate these policies.

Each investigation similarly has its constraints. This study likewise has impediments, which are talked about as under. The current research is constrained to depression, loneliness, and organizational commitment. Besides, the study is restricted to employees in the region Swabi, KP, Pakistan. The current study was cross-sectional because the length of the fulfillment of this study was short and the researcher needs to finish the investigation in determining time. Another impediment is that the researcher utilizes quantitative measures rather than qualitative ones. Besides, the information was gathered through basic simple random sampling that may influence the outcome's generalization. In addition, the monetary assets were restricted, because of which it is difficult to have excess to certain research papers that are significant for this study. The researcher invested a great deal of energy to distribute and find different assets that influenced the advancement of the study.

In this study, the researcher utilizes a cross-sectional technique due to limited time. In the future, the analyst is proposed to use longitudinal strategies to accomplish a powerful outcome. The restricted money-related assets made it difficult to have an overabundance of certain research papers, which is significant for the investigation. In the future, the HES ought to allocate assets for the researcher to have

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excess to that significant research paper. Furthermore, quantitative measures were utilized in the current investigation. In the future, the researcher should use both quantitative and subjective measures for a better understanding of the mediating impact of depression on the connection between loneliness and organizational commitment. Besides, the researcher should take a large number of samples not only from another region but also from other developing and developed countries. This study will, in general, discover the intervening impact of depression on the connection between loneliness and organizational commitment. In the future, the researcher should direct investigate the mediating effect of positive social connections, social exercises, inspiration, and social friendship on the relationship between loneliness and organizational commitment.

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