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EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMITMENT IN YEMEN ISLAMIC BANKING SECTOR

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Abstract

This is a conceptual paper to describe the relationship between employee empowerment, and organizational commitment (OC) through the tribalism as a mediating factor in Yemen Islamic banking sector. In particular, it explains employee empowerment in different context where tribalism penetrates deeply in organizational culture, work ethics and HR practices. The study also reviews literature on the impact of employee empowerment on OC and to what extent is tribalism plays a mediator role in the relationship between employee empowerment and OC in the Yemen Islamic banks. The factors outlined in the paper are analysed using the theoretical framework of social exchange theory. The analysis of interrelationships between these variables assists to develop strategy that increases commitment and organizational performance in banking sector, particularly within Yemen tribal society. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature on empowerment, which is done mostly in western settings. The study findings may assist organization and policy makers in crafting a better strategy to enhance employee commitment.

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Keywords: Employee empowerment, organizational commitment, tribalism, Yemen Islamic banks sector.



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1. Introduction

Commitment is an area that needs more attention in organizational research and practice due to its positive outcomes (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2005; Yousef, 2000). Most studies (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Aladwan *et al.*, 2015; Zaitouni, Sawalha, & Sharif, 2011) suggests that there are many factors considered as antecedents to OC such as work experiences, personal and organizational factors. Many of these factors which have been studied extensively (Nik Ab.Rahman & Sharmin Shahid (2009) and Jha, (2011) are the human resource practices and employees empowerment. Rawat (2011) found that empowerment is granting power or enabling people to exercise power would lead to the organizational commitment at work place. Some researchers as Ugboro, Jha, and Yang have focused effect of the employees empowerment, in developed countries (Ugboro, 2006), while others have examined the effect of the employees empowerment on OC among the emerging nations (Jha, 2011; Powpaka, 2008; Yang, Liu, Chen, & Pan, 2014). The third world countries have unique features which differ from the features of the developed countries. Particularly Arabic countries possess unique social and cultural values that have an essential effect on managerial functions (Aladwan *et al.*, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

There is a gap in the previous literature in terms of the impact of empowerment on commitment where there are inconsistent results exist. Another gap that can be extracted from the literature is factors that might strengthen or weaken the relationship between empowerment, and OC (Hui, Au, & Fock1, 2004; Ugboro, 2006). Furthermore, impact of tribalism as unique features of Yemeni society context has not been fully examined, even though tribalism is the main point of customs and traditions for most Yemeni people (Corstange, 2008; Manea, 1998). Tribalism in Yemen is responsible for underdevelopment and corruption, acting as a major stumbling block to democracy as well as socio-economic development (Baabbad, 2015). Therefore, commitment and loyalty to tribe is given ever greater relevance than commitment and loyalty to the country or organization (Manea, 1998).

Additionally, Yemen banking sector has widely grown to a large number of specialized, commercial banks and financial institutions with various products and activities. However, limited research done in the service sector especially in Islamic Banking. Due to this unique problem that hinder performance and job satisfaction, this research focuses on Yemen banking sector, that may has similar situation in other banking sector in the third world countries. Compared to Western studies, the study on human resource issues in Yemen Islamic banking sector may provide in-depth understanding of employee empowerment, tribalism and OC in different society context.

3. Research Questions

Based on the above issues, the questions that arise are:

1. What is the impact of employee empowerment on the OC of employees in Yemen Islamic banks?
2. To what extent is tribalism playing a mediator role on the relationship between the employee empowerment and OC in Yemen Islamic banks?

4. Purpose of the Study

This conceptual paper is intended to understand the impact of employee empowerment on OC in Yemen Islamic banks through analysis and understanding of the employee empowerment, tribalism and organisational commitment literature. The three component models of organizational commitment namely: 1) normative commitment; 2) continuance commitment; and 3) affective commitment are examined in analysing the impact of employee empowerment on commitment models. This research has been restricted to study the topic based on the following objectives:

1. To explore the impact of employee empowerment of on the OC of employees in Yemen Islamic banks.
2. To investigate the mediating effect of Tribalism on the relationship between the employee empowerment and OC in Yemen Islamic banks

5. Underpinning theory

Using social exchange theory, this study explains the research framework, linking the relations between employee empowerment, OC and tribalism. According to Settoon *et al.*, (1996), the concept of social exchange theory is based on the norm of reciprocity, where the theory is used as the theoretical foundation to understand organizational relationships in the organization (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). According to social exchange theory, employees show engaged motivation behavior when they are given empowerment. Andretta (2011) defined empowerment as positive relation to employee motivation, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterized by an absorption. Hence, empowerment helps to put effort in work and being persistence while facing difficulties. Accordingly, it appears that when the organization takes care of employees through the given empowerment, the employees show more engaged behavior to their work, leading to better performance in the workplace. Therefore, empowerment will lead to a greater commitment, and thus employees could achieve the organization goals. Similarly, this study explores a reciprocal exchange of relationship that reflects relative dependency to each other by examining the impact of employee empowerment on OC in Islamic banking sector within Yemen tribal society.

6. Literature review and hypothesis

6.1. Employee empowerment:

Ardahaey & Nabilou (2012) stated that employee empowerment characterizes the interaction at work environment among a group of people, improving the decision-making process of the organization. Employee empowerment also known as the authority, powers and responsibilities granted to employees to control and use organizational resources in achieving organizational objectives (Jha, 2011). Ardahaey & Nabilou (2012) said that employee empowerment enhances the performance of the organization by engaging employees in decision-making processes. Organization which recognizes individuals' efforts and rewards them may generate pool of people who observe high commitment and feel that the organization is recognizing their efforts (Jha, 2011). Employee empowering gives a positive impact on job satisfaction, improve organizational performance, enhance organizational commitment, and retain members in the organization (Hashim, 2010). Affendi *et al.* (2010) concurred that empowerment helps and

encourages employees to take the appropriate decisions, developing leadership qualities, and self-belief in determining the decisions. This belief leads to self-motivation and a sense of independent responsibility which translates to more sincerity, commitment and extra effort to work in the organization.

Employee empowerment can be implemented in two ways. The first method as range of different management practices, which aims to promote the responsibilities and increase self-reliance (psychological employee empowerment), the second method is as an orientation active work of the individual (behavioral employee empowerment) (Boudrias *et al.*, 2009). Behavioral dimension of employee empowerment deals with the role of management in employee empowering (Pelit, Öztürk, & Arslantürk, 2011), while psychological employee empowerment is the perception by employees that they have the opportunity to help determine work roles, accomplish meaningful work, and influence important decisions (Yukl & Becker, 2006). According to Pelit *et al.* (2011), employee empowerment has a broad focus, while psychological employee empowerment has a more evaluative focus, which based on the match between an individual's values and demands of his or her work tasks. Thus, this research focused on psychological dimensions of employee empowerment as it is closely related to the perception of employees and how they perceive themselves in the workplace, which might impact on organizational commitment in Yemen Islamic banking sector.

6.2. Organizational Commitment (OC)

Yamao & Sekiguchi (2015) stated that OC can be defined as the relative strength of the individual related to the achievement the goals of the organization. Foote *et al.*(2005) stated that OC is widely described as a key factor in building organizational relationships between individuals and organizations. It is an acknowledgment and acceptance of organizational goals and effort dedicated to work on behalf of the organization. Cohen (2006) stated that organizational commitment has been considered as an important topic which attracts the attention of both practitioners and academicians who studied the changes in the behavioural and organizational of business organizations. It is essential to pay attention to the commitment issue in organizations because it helps to maintain stability, and employees loyalty in the organization, thus helping the organization to achieve high quality performance (Zaitouni, Sawalha, & Sharif, 2011). Accordingly, it is expected that organizational commitment will reflect their desire to achieve the organizational objectives. They concluded that employees whom have high level commitment will be ready to devote their time and efforts for the benefit of their organizations. However, previous literature indicates that there are several dimensions of organizational commitment which affect employees; which one of the most common models is Allen and Meyer (1996). Woods *et al.*(2012) stated that organizational commitment has three dimensions (Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment, Continuance Commitment).

6.3. Tribalism in Yemen

Yemen is embedded with social issues and tribalism customs that raise some problems in employees' organizational behaviour, especially their commitment, and effectiveness. Based on the unique nature of social relations in many tribes of the Arab countries, especially in Yemen, the tribalism social relations constitute a crucial role in the economic, social, cultural and political aspects. It is nature and habit of

Yemen tribalism customs to give more attention to the interests of the tribe members (Baabbad, 2015; Manea, 1998). Some studies suggest that the tribes constitute about 85% of the population in Yemen, where more people of Yemen attended and were not an expression of the ancient spree, and tribalism customs currently controlling them (McCune, 2012). In Yemen, the tribe is the basic social unit and structural.

Similarly, the tribe also considered as the basic social unit in the Arabian Peninsula (Corstange, 2008). In this regard, the role of the tribe is to maintain and preserve the Tribalism customs. Interrelationship between members of the same tribe is important social issues in Yemen. Some tribes in Yemen are socially connected to a confederation, so that all members of the tribe behave coherently to protect each other (Al-Dawsari, 2012; Baabbad, 2015).

6.4. Employee empowerment and OC

According to Ugboro (2006), effective employee empowerment and job redesign must be positively related to OC. Robert *et al.* (2000) state that in the high power cultural context, the resistance to employee empowerment will be strong. However, Aryee, *et al.* (2006) and Hui *et al.* (2004) provide supporting evidence to the impact of employee empowerment on job satisfaction. Interestingly, this impact is more clear in a low power distance cultural context.

Hirst *et al.* (2008) argue that minimize the distance between leaders and members and rules reduction could help organizations to enhance employee empowerment. Jha (2011) examine the relationship between psychological employee empowerment and OC factors for Indian information technology executives during economic recession. Their findings show that psychological employee empowerment is positively related to affective and normative commitment. However, they document that the psychological employee empowerment dose not explain the continuance commitment.

A literature of empowering leadership, employee empowerment and outcome variables are extended by examining the mediating role of employee engagement (Andreetta, 2011). In particular, employee engagement is examined as a mediator variable to the associations between empowering leadership, employee empowerment, affective commitment and turnover intention. Andreetta's (2011) indicates that employee empowerment mediated the relationship between empowering leadership and engagement. In addition, the results show that engagement partially mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and effective commitment, which in turn affected turnover intentions. The study shows that employee empowerment contribute positively on OC. Therefore, the following hypothesis is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment in Yemen Islamic banking sector.

6.5. Tribalism, employee empowerment, and OC

Tribal identity has a negative impact on industrial productivity (Alberto, *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, they may be less likely to accept, endorse, or interact with non-tribalism members. Peterson (2008) defines the tribesmen as a norm of the society and they have a unique culture which is referred to their ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge in society. Hofstede (1997) reveals that collectivism as cultural dimension refers to that the people act mainly as members of a lifelong and coherent group. In addition, people who have large outspread families used it as a safeguard in exchange for unquestioning allegiance (Phillips, 2010).

This tribalism customs reflect the interdependence between members of the tribe. Arab countries like Yemen have a unique societal structure with varying tribes. In Yemen, the tribalism customs encapsulate the interests of the tribe and its members, where the environment for business is largely control and lead by varying traditions like customs, rules, norms and attitudes towards social activities and practices(Al-Dawsari, 2012).

A literature of in-group and out-group behaviors suggests that tribalism identity is likely to be negatively related with management practices organizations (Zoogah, 2016). Manea (1998) found the tribalism identity of employees is likely to impact their interactions in workplace. Indeed, organizations' managers of a particular tribe could be more likely to prefer the homogeneity policies rather than heterogeneity policies that enable them to recruit and select tribalism members on expenses of non-tribal members.

In this regard, some tribes in Yemen have social connection in the form of confederation, where they behave as members of a single tribe. Therefore, these relations may threat the forming for employee empowerment and the commitment especially when the resources management and some employees are from similar tribes that have a friendly-social connection. Thus, this study tries to investigate the impact of Tribalism on the employees' commitment and the mediating effect of Tribalism on the relationship between the employee empowerment and OC. Thus, the following hypotheses are predicted:

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between employee empowerment and tribalism in Yemen Islamic banking sector

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between Tribalism and organizational commitment in Yemen Islamic banking sector.

Hypothesis 4: The tribalism has a mediating effect on the relationship between the employee empowerment and organizational commitment in Yemen Islamic banking sector.

7. Research Methods

7.1. Conceptual framework

Based on the previous literatures, the variables that have been selected for the study are presented in the framework (Figure 1). The social exchange theory is used to develop the research model, demonstrating the relationship between the dependent variable (organizational commitment), independent variables (Employee Empowerment) and mediating variable (Tribalism). In line with Rawat (2011); and Yang *et al.* (2014) positive perceptions of empowerment will lead to increased organizational commitment.

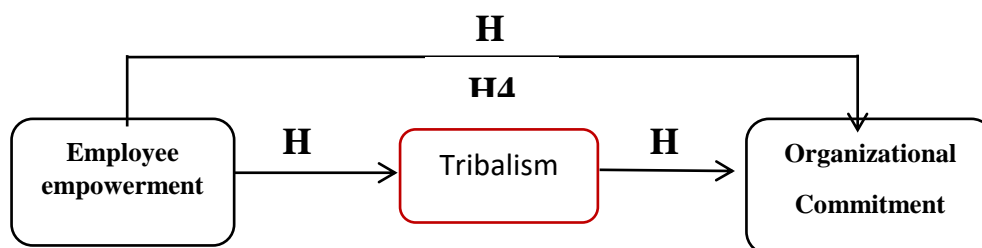


Figure 01. Conceptual Framework

This is a conceptual paper that is based mainly on a review of literature on the relations between employee empowerment , OC and tribalism. For future, this study will rely on quantitative approaches. Quantitative design is used in this study to test hypotheses on how independent variables affect dependent variable. It is most often associated with a deductive approach, consisting theory and tests, provide evidence for or against a pre-specified hypothesis(Casebeer & Verhoef, 1997). The survey will employ questionnaires to obtain personal and social facts, beliefs and attitudes (Pedhazur, 1997).

The unit of analysis for this study is the individual level, whereby the sample is the employees in Yemen Islamic banks. The data will be collected from the three selected cities via the distribution of a structured questionnaire to employees the Yemeni Islamic banks. The random sampling technique will be used because it has the least bias and offers the most generalization (Cooper & Schindler, 2006; Sekaran, 2003). Survey will be distributed in 4 banks, the target population of this study focuses on three governments which are selected from the north, middle and south of Yemen, representing the employees in Islamic banks sector in Yemen, which has a total population (2261). The sample frame of this study relies on three governments namely Sana'a, Taiz, and Aden. The populations of these governments are (1337). The chosen sample of the employees reflect the entire population to provide a more complete picture (Table 1). Data analysis and hypothesis testing will be conduct through using several statistical tools and methods employed such as, SPSS, Descriptive Statistic Measures and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

Table 01. Sampling Frame and Sample Size

Regions	Governorates	Population	Percentage	Sample size
North	Sana'a	608	45%	136
Middle	Taiz	413	31%	94
South	Aden	316	24%	72
Total		1337	100%	302

7.2. Measurement

This study plans to use five- point Likert's scale ranging from: "totally disagree" to "totally agree"(Cavana, *et al.*, 2001). The measurements for three variables are performed according to the recommendations from various sources as follows: Firstly: measurement of empowerment will be developed and modified based on the previous empowerment studies (Hayes, 1994), and the measurement of empowerment consists of 9 items . Secondly, measurement of OC will be adapted and modified in the framework based on the previous studies to measure OC in Yemen Islamic banks. OC is measured by using three dimensional model of OC, developed and initially validated by Allen & Meyer(1993). Thus, the measurement of OC consists of 18 items. Thirdly, the measurement of Tribalism consists of 9 items as appendix (1). The questionnaire items for measurement of tribalism are adapted from Organizational culture measure (Glaser, *et al.*1987).

8. Conclusion

This study adds to the growing literature on empowerment by describes the relationship between empowerment as independent variables and OC as dependent variable through the Tribalism Relations as a mediating variable in Yemen Islamic banking sector third world countries particularly Yemen have a unique context that differ from the developed countries context. Thus, there is a call for research to revitalize empowerment for employees in all cultural contexts. Arabic countries possess unique social and cultural values that have an essential effect on managerial functions (Altarawneh, 2009). Therefore, it is expected that this study will contribute in enriching the existent literature through investigating the culture effect of tribalism on the empowerment and OC relationship in developing country context such as Yemen

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Appendix (1)

Dimension	Items	Source
Tribalism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In my bank, my tribe identity is an obstacle to confront problems constructively. 2. In my bank, my tribe identity is an obstacle to work cooperatively. 3. In my bank, my tribe identity is an obstacle to work with resolving disagreements cooperatively. 4. In my bank, my tribe identity is an obstacle to work directly and honestly with my workmates. 5. In my bank, my tribe identity is an obstacle for getting an atmosphere of trust. 6. In my bank, because of my tribe identity, my opinion is not counted. 7. In my bank, because of my tribe identity, my ideas are not valued. 8. In my bank, because of my tribe identity, I feel like not being part of the family. 9. In my bank, because of my tribe identity, I seldom asked to make suggestion how to make my job better. 	(Glaser, Susan; Zamanou, 1987)