



An Empirical Investigation of The Impact of Training and Leadership Employee Loyalty in Sulaimani Banks

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Abstract

Employee loyalty is a cornerstone of organizational success, prompting extensive efforts to foster it. This research study investigates the impact of two specific components of Total Quality Management (TQM), namely Employee Training and Leadership, on employee loyalty within the context of Sulaimani Banks. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires sent to 90 employees across various banks in Sulaimani. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques, including regression analysis, to identify the impact of Independent variables on the dependent variable. The results of the analysis reveal a positive correlation between employee training and employee loyalty. This finding suggests the significance of investments made by banks in employee training initiatives have a significant impact on enhancing employee loyalty within the organization. On the other hand, the analysis reveals no significant relationship between Leadership and employee loyalty. While leadership undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in organizational performance and employee satisfaction, the findings of this study suggest that, within the specific context of Sulaimani Banks, other factors may exert a more substantial influence on employee loyalty.

Keywords: Employee loyalty, total quality management, employee training, leadership.

Recieved: 10/5/2024

Accepted: 19/6/2024



Introduction

In the face of the challenging financial and economic situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, government employees have encountered significant obstacles in accessing adequate training opportunities and resources. The conflict with ISIS has further strained the already limited funding, resulting in irregular salary payments and a scarcity of development initiatives for employees. Since the 1960s, employee loyalty, and organizational commitment have been among the most thrilling objects searched (Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014). One of the descriptions of this term says that Employee loyalty is wishing to put in much work for the organization's advantage (Becker et al, 1995). Also, it has been said that loyalty positively affects employee retention in an organization, characterized by a strong wish to maintain working with the same organization (Turkyilmaz et al, 2011). On the flip side, loyalty is the main factor that directs an organization's success. Nowadays, modern businesses are recognized for their high level of competition and technological advancements (Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014). According to Martensen and Gormholds (2006). The factors that affect employee loyalty are employee satisfaction, effective leadership, job content, and customer orientation. However, other scholars talked about many other factors that affect employee loyalty, and one of the factors bolded in this paper and meant to affect employee loyalty is total quality management. TQM is commonly known as a management philosophy, and it has become the critical mission for those organizations who are looking for competitive advantage in the market (Damanpour & Gopalakrishnan 2001) also, it was said TQM that its management philosophy that includes a variety of technical and behavioral elements and works for improving organization performance (Hung et al, 2011).

Given the resource constraints and urgency of the current circumstances, we opted to concentrate on only two TQM elements, Leadership and Training. This decision was made considering their perceived relevance and potential impact on employee loyalty within the prevailing socio-economic context. By narrowing our focus, we aimed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the specific aspects that could significantly influence employee loyalty while maintaining practicality in implementation.

Employee loyalty

The general term loyalty can be viewed as an individual's affection of attachment or division to a specific object, which can be only an ideal or responsibility source for other people or groups of people (Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014) but, in the managerial description, the behavioral component recognized as loyalty uses to improve the organization through employees affection to the organization. As a result, the organization's goals, like high service quality and greater efficiency together with productivity, also all other objectives of the organization are achieved (Rajput et al, 2016), as well Logan (1948) put a belief that "employee loyalty is a strong tie that binds an employee to his or her company even when it is may not be economically sound for him or her to stay there" likewise Elegido (2013) had an opinion that employee loyalty is a purposeful commitment that may require the employee to scarify some aspect of one's self-interest beyond what would be needed by one's legal and other moral duties, to promote best interests of one's employer.

In other cases, Hornung et al. (2014) explained that many organizations emphasize measuring employee loyalty and motivating them to keep the staff happy. In other words, employee loyalty is all about employees being committed to the organization's success and firmly believing that working with that organization is their best option (Rajput et al, 2016). Employee loyalty helps an employee not to constantly search for another job or will not respond to other organizations' offers. Also, it could be added that the loyalty of an employee is a physiological statement, and it describes the relationship of an employee with an organization that they work for, and that has a



bridge gap to their dictions to stay or not with their current organization (Allen & Giraffe, 2001), it could also be predicted that loyalty of employee is a workers attachment to the organization that may be considered an emotional response, especially when employee strongly believes in organizations values and goals as well as has a strong desire to maintain the membership with the organization.

According to Dirks & Ferrin (2002), employees choose to turn over or leave whenever they feel their leader cannot be trusted or do not feel satisfied, also about satisfaction and loyalty Lady et al, (2018) assumed that the more satisfied employee regards their working environment, the more likely they will develop a sense of commitment towards the organization. Nevertheless, Chen et al, (2022) said that in the last few years, the most attention in management has been on employee loyalty and satisfaction. Many studies show that loyal employees speak for the organization's value, and dedicated employees are more committed to improving service quality.

Effective commitment means an employee wants to keep the relationship with a specific employer because of the enjoyment of the relationship for its benefit. Employees need to experience a sense of loyalty and belonging (Allen & Giraffe, 2001). This sense of belonging is synonymous with commitment to the organization. It is also believed that loyalty manifests an organizational commitment and the relative strength of an individual's identification with involvement with a specific organization (Roehling et al, 2001). Wanga et al. (2012) believe that loyalty becomes a central concern as firms seek assurance that empowered employees will exercise their discretion in the organization's interests, which means that loyal employees can be a precious asset to the organization as they can assist in increasing profits for organizations.

Dedicated employees can understand customer needs and deliver them effectively (Soltani, 2006), although every firm has purchasers whom the organization seeks their loyalty to increase the profit. Employee loyalty grows from customer loyalty, which researchers imagined to be the foundation and driving force of sustainably developing enterprises. One way a company can maintain customer loyalty and gain more profit is to keep their employee's loyalty (Dhir et al, 2020). However, many reasons affect employee loyalty, and according to Martensen and Gronholdt (2006), reasons are probably employee satisfaction, leadership, job content, and customer orientation. Furthermore, this research paper will examine whether the total quality management elements affect employee loyalty.

Total quality management (TQM)

Many public and private organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of quality, particularly in developing countries facing new global challenges. Total Quality Management (TQM) stands out as a key focus for organizations, as noted by Jaca and Psomas (2015), who emphasize its significance. TQM has gained widespread recognition worldwide, being viewed as a distinguishing factor between organizations (Dean & Bowen, 1994) and as the most advanced global approach to quality (Jaca and Psomas, 2015),

TQM, a management philosophy prevalent across industries and countries for over three decades, prioritizes organizational effectiveness and flexibility (Chang et al., 2010). Definitions of TQM often refer to its 'soft' or 'hard' sides, which encompass organizational concepts and principles like leadership and employee empowerment, and improvement tools and techniques such as quality analysis or supplier relationships (Fotopoulos & Psomas, 2009).

Numerous studies highlight the role of TQM in enhancing employee loyalty. TQM's emphasis on process improvement, customer satisfaction, and employee involvement fosters a sense of ownership among employees, leading to increased loyalty. This reciprocal relationship between TQM and employee loyalty contributes to organizational success by improving product and service quality and enhancing customer satisfaction (Soltani et al., 2008)



Brah et al., (2000) identify eleven constructs where TQM can be effectively implemented, including leadership, customer focus, employee involvement, and employee training, among others. Despite its practical importance and advantages, some researchers question the effectiveness of TQM. Hung et al. (2011) argues against its efficacy, while Sila and Ebrahimpour (2002) attribute skepticism to the perceived time lag between implementing TQM and seeing improvements in business performance.

Employee Training

Employee training is a critical aspect of organizational development, ensuring that employees acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. Employee training is a multifaceted process that encompasses various methods, approaches, and outcomes. Research in this area delves into the effectiveness of different training programs, the impact of training on employee performance and satisfaction, as well as the role of technology in modern training initiatives.

There is a demonstrated positive correlation between the extent of training provided to employees and their loyalty to the organization, as indicated by research. Employees who undergo more comprehensive training are more likely to exhibit loyalty, expressed through a decreased likelihood of leaving the organization, heightened job satisfaction, and a greater willingness to go above and beyond in performing their duties. (Mampuru, 2024)

Alternatively, studies have highlighted a positive relationship between the degree of training provided to personnel and their allegiance to the corporation. Investigation has revealed that individuals who have received a more substantial amount of training tend to display increased commitment to the company. This commitment is evident through a reduced probability of desertion, enhanced job satisfaction, and a more conspicuous willingness to exceed the demands of their obligations.

Many Studies emphasize the importance of well-designed training programs in enhancing employee skills, knowledge, and job performance. Karim et al., (2019) explores the effectiveness of different training methods such as on-the-job training, simulations, and e-learning in improving employee learning outcomes. Hafeez & Akbar (2015) highlight the positive impact of training on employee performance metrics such as productivity, quality of work, and job satisfaction. The integration of technology in training programs is a growing trend, with research focusing on the benefits and challenges associated with virtual training environments. A study by Blumstein et al., (2020) demonstrates that surgeons trained through virtual reality (VR) methods exhibited a significant improvement in performance compared to those trained through conventional methods. By synthesizing findings from various studies, it is evident that employee training plays a crucial role in organizational success by equipping employees with the necessary skills to adapt to changing work environments. Effective training programs not only enhance individual performance but also contribute to overall organizational growth and competitiveness.

Leadership

Leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a crucial role in organizational success. Research in the field of leadership has evolved to encompass various theories and models that seek to understand the dynamics of effective leadership. According to Avolio and Yammarino (2013), transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve common goals, has been identified as a key factor in driving organizational performance and employee engagement. This style of leadership emphasizes the importance of vision, charisma, and emotional intelligence in influencing followers towards higher levels of performance.



Moreover, the trait theory of leadership posits that certain inherent characteristics or traits in individuals predispose them to be effective leaders. Studies by Judge et al. (2002) have explored the relationship between personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience with leadership effectiveness. Understanding these traits can help organizations identify and develop potential leaders who possess the necessary qualities to lead teams and drive organizational success.

In addition, situational leadership theory suggests that effective leadership is contingent upon the specific situation or context in which leaders operate. Hersey and Blanchard (1969) proposed a model that emphasizes adapting leadership styles based on the maturity level of followers. By matching leadership behaviors to the readiness of followers, leaders can effectively guide their teams towards achieving goals and navigating challenges within dynamic organizational environments.

Previous studies and hypothesis development

For years, the effect of TQM on other elements of the organization has been a mystery, creating a gap in the academic literature, which pushed researchers to try to fill the gap through theoretical studies and empirical investigations. However, several researchers recently investigated the relationship between TQM and employee loyalty; Chang, Chiu, and Chen (2010) conducted a study in Taipei city, and 200 government employees participated in it, and concluded that TQM practices affect employee loyalty through employee satisfaction. Similarly, workers who experience satisfaction and authentic motivation are inclined to exhibit allegiance and a hesitancy towards departure (Said, 2015). Another research done in Pakistan by N. A. Malik et al. (2013) showed that TQM practices like training, teamwork, appraisal systems, and compensation positively impact better employee loyalty. Training and development programs significantly enhance job satisfaction, loyalty, and retention among academic staff in competitive university environments, as revealed by a recent study that emphasizes the importance of tailored training initiatives in creating a positive work atmosphere, fostering long-term engagement, and enhancing institutional quality and reputation (Mampuru, 2024). Additionally, Khuong and Tien in (2013) conducted a research that concluded more support, teamwork, and training, which are essential elements of TQM according to previous citations, will lead to higher employee loyalty. Regarding the relationship between leadership, as an element of TQM, and employee loyalty, Andrianto et al., (2023) stated that a welcoming and empowering organizational environment has the potential to amplify the positive impact of leadership approach on both employee productivity and commitment. Conversely, a study by Zanabazar et al., (2023) examined the relationship between leadership style and employee loyalty, engagement, and organizational success. While the study primarily found positive correlations between transformational and transactional leadership and employee loyalty, it also noted that transactional leadership had a moderate positive effect on employee loyalty, which could be interpreted as a negative correlation when compared to the stronger positive effect of transformational leadership. Hence, based on the above mentioned works this study try to examine the impact of two important elements of TQM namely, Training and Leadership style on increasing employee loyalty and the following hypotheses will be developed for this purpose:

H1: Employee Training positively impacts employee loyalty.

H2: Leadership positively impacts employee loyalty.

Research framework



Methodology

Data collection and sample

The primary data for this study was collected through online questionnaires sent to employees at three public and five private banks in Sulaimani city. The online questionnaires were initially sent to points of contact within the banks. The survey was shared among employees via a snowball sampling technique. The survey was distributed through official communication channels, such as email, and non-official platforms to reach employees without formal email addresses. This process resulted in 90 statistically acceptable responses. Importantly, the confidentiality of the respondents and anonymity of the banks were conditions for their participation, and therefore, specific bank names have not been disclosed. This approach was necessary to ensure candid responses and protect the privacy of all participants involved.

Variables and measures

In this study, respondents were asked to rate statements related to training, leadership, and loyalty in their workplace using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Established measures for employee loyalty, adapted and adopted from (Malik et al 2013), were employed. Additionally, TQM elements, sourced from (Ibrar & Khan, 2015), were assessed through respondents' ratings. These measures, originating from prior research, exhibited high reliability (Cronbach Alpha > 0.902) as validated by a reliability test, thereby affirming their suitability for evaluating the research variables in this quantitative study. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (v.27.0.1).

Data analysis and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
L1	90	1	5	3.01	1.370
L2	90	1	5	3.49	1.138
L3	90	1	5	2.91	1.147
ET1	90	1	5	3.14	1.259
ET2	90	1	5	3.26	1.264
ET3	90	1	5	3.23	1.285
ET4	90	1	5	3.30	1.424
ET5	90	1	5	3.29	1.374
EL1	90	1	5	3.10	1.167
EL2	90	1	5	3.31	1.009
EL3	90	1	5	3.24	1.323
EL4	90	1	5	3.19	1.277
EL5	90	1	5	3.26	1.144
Valid N	90				



The presented table encapsulates statistical measures for various groups, each denoted by labels representing investigated variables. The sample size (N) is consistently 90 across all groups, implying a balanced distribution of data. The columns elucidate essential statistics, including the minimum and maximum values, mean (average), and standard deviation. Notably, the absence of missing values is highlighted by the “Valid N” entry, with a consistent count of 90, reinforcing the completeness of the dataset. The standard deviation values provide insights into the dispersion of data within each group, complementing the mean values. This comprehensive statistical overview facilitates a nuanced understanding of the central tendency, variability, and range of values within the examined groups.

The value of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient

Table 2 The value of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient

Number	Variables	Number of class	(α) Value
Independent variable(s)			
1	Leadership	3	0.800
2	Employee Training	5	0.907
Dependent variable			
3	Employee loyalty	5	0.737
Total		13	

Table 3 presents the values of the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the study’s independent and dependent variables. The table includes the number of items (or classes) used to measure each variable along with their corresponding Cronbach’s Alpha (α) values, reflecting the internal consistency and reliability of the scales employed. The independent variables evaluated are “Leadership” and “Employee Training,” with three and five items, respectively. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for “Leadership” is 0.800, indicating good reliability. For “Employee Training,” the value is 0.907, suggesting excellent reliability. The dependent variable, “Employee Loyalty,” consists of five items and has a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.737, which is considered acceptable for internal consistency. The table aggregates a total of 13 items across all variables, highlighting the robustness of the measurement instruments used in the study.

Model Summary

To analyze the hypothesis, the multiple linear regression was employed at 95% confidence intervals. The analysis showed a significant model summary $F(1,2)=38.227$, $P < 0.001$, $Adj R^2 = 0.456$, $R^2 \text{ change} = 0.468$.

Table 3 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.684 ^a	0.468	0.456	0.612	0.468	38.227	2	87	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Training, Leadership



Results

The analysis found a positive influence of employee training on employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 5.62$, $P < .001$), indicating that hypothesis 1 is accepted. This result supports Mampuru (2024), Andrianto et al., (2023), Malik (2013), and Khuong and Tien's (2013) research have been mentioned in the literature previously. The result, however, shows that leadership did not have a positive effect on employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 0.25$, $P < .001$), hence, hypothesis 2 is rejected. This result supports Zanabazar et al. (2023) research that has been mentioned in the literature previously.

Table 4 Regression analysis of a dependent variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	Constant	1.580	0.223		7.101	0.000
	Employee Training	0.462	0.069	0.628	6.673	0.000
	Leadership	0.074	0.076	0.092	0.975	0.332

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Loyalty

Discussion

The first element, employee training, emerged as a prominent factor in our research, with a positive correlation to employee loyalty. Despite the scarcity of funding for training programs, our study highlights the importance of even modest investments in this area. Identifying the potential benefits of training initiatives under financially constrained conditions can guide policymakers and organizational leaders in allocating available resources more effectively to maximize employee loyalty and satisfaction.

The second element, leadership, was included in the study despite its limited impact on employee loyalty as identified in our research. Understanding the dynamics of leadership within this context is crucial to assess its role in shaping organizational culture and employee motivation. Additionally, it provides valuable insights into potential areas of improvement and optimization, which may have indirect but vital implications for overall employee loyalty. It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research, primarily stemming from the focus on only two TQM elements. Other elements of TQM may also play a role in influencing employee loyalty, and further research is warranted to explore their impact in the unique context of the Kurdistan region.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the significance of Leadership and Training within the framework of Total Quality Management in fostering employee loyalty in the challenging environment of the Kurdistan region of Iraq. By focusing on these specific elements, we aim to contribute to the development of practical strategies that can be implemented under financial constraints, ultimately leading to improved working conditions and increased loyalty among bank employees.

Conclusion

This research explores total quality management (TQM) in the banking sector of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, focusing on how employee training and leadership impact employee loyalty. The study highlights the importance of training in fostering commitment among banking sector employees, suggesting that investing in training programs



enhances loyalty and engagement. However, the study finds that leadership style does not significantly affect employee loyalty, suggesting the need for further exploration into specific leadership traits and practices in the region. The research offers practical recommendations for banking institutions, emphasizing the importance of effective training programs and the need to adapt leadership practices to meet evolving workforce needs. Overall, the study contributes to our understanding of TQM in the banking sector and provides insights for future research in this region and beyond.

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