

Does Organisational Commitment Moderate the Relationship between Internal Marketing and Market Orientation of the Public Sector Universities in Pakistan? *A Structural Equation Modelling Approach*

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This paper builds on the notion that positive culture and behaviours, for example market orientation of internal marketing, are sensitive to positive attitudes like organisational commitment and non-profits' contextual peculiarities. Thus, the paper aimed to validate the positive moderating effect of organisational commitment on the market orientation related implications of internal marketing in the non-profit context of public sector higher educational institutes. The paper utilised a composite questionnaire in a survey design, through the integration of market orientation scale by Kohli and Jaworski (1993), the internal marketing scale by Foreman and Money (1990) and the organisational commitment scale by Allen and Mayer (1990). The data collected was subject to Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) through SPSS AMOS for reliability, validity and hypotheses testing. The results of the CFA led to multiple items reduction in the aforementioned three scales, indicating the contextual sensitivity of the construct. The outcomes of the SEM on the refined

scale supported the hypotheses that internal marketing has a significant impact on market orientation and that organisational commitment positively moderates the relationship. The findings may contribute towards the scholarly understanding of the three constructs and the way they can be harmonised in the academic context to yield performance implications. The research may guide managers in public sector higher educational institutes to synergies their internal marketing programs and human resource policies to create a positive market-oriented culture that may lead to better learning facilitation and human development.

Keywords: *Internal Marketing, Market Orientation, Higher education*

Introduction

The current age of globalisation extends the competitive scope beyond the blurring national and geographic boundaries and hence increasing competition day by day. Organisations need to ensure their very existence through the achievement of their long-term strategic objectives. The same is true for the higher education institute where even in the public sector there is a global shift towards the marketisation of the education sector, the so-called knowledge economy. Scholarly research identifies a global paradigm shift in the higher education governance systems and policies by an introduction of the market type mechanisms (Jongbloed, 2003). Marketisation and market related mechanisms, for example adopting the for-profit market orientation, are considered to ensure much autonomy, empowerment and innovation in higher education institute in a competitive market structure that may lead to value and innovation through self-ignited efforts (Young, 2002, p. 79; Dill, 2003, p. 136). This ultimately means that like for-profit corporations, universities must develop strategic market-oriented strategies and must actively engage in activities that may lead to higher intake and customer satisfaction.

Market orientation is a strategic asset that requires long-term efforts from the top to the bottom of the organisation. Scholars argue that market orientation is a philosophy, an organisation wide approach that shapes the everyday activities and behaviours of the people within the organisation towards understanding and responding to the target market requirements (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). This implies that in order to develop an effective market-oriented culture the strategy formulator at the top-level must ensure proper employee motivation, coordination and commitment towards the target market. They initially recommend internal marketing for effective market orientation. One can in this regard conclude that universities must seek new organisational schemes and approaches to internal marketing communication that may encourage employees to develop and sustain market-oriented behaviour. Behaviours that may lead to better organisational commitment and strong cohesion of the functions where market

related intelligence is actively disseminated across the organisation and responded accordingly. Consistently, this research aims to determine the moderating role of organisational commitment in the relationship between internal marketing and market orientation of the public sector universities.

Literature Review

Scholarly research consistently suggests a connection between organisations' internal marketing efforts and their overall strategic market orientation. This may include generation of general intelligence about the customer market, the dissemination of that intelligence within multiple organisational function and responding to it with a better value and in effective ways (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990, 1993; Lings, 2000; Abzari *et al.*, 2011; and many more). Additionally, scholars suggest that internal marketing is a key source of multiple organisational outcomes ranging from market orientation, staff retention, and profitability (Souchin and Lings, 2001). Authors like Voola *et al.*, (2003) suggest internal marketing tactics and strategies as antecedents to organisations' level of market orientation. Consistently Bouranta *et al.*, (2005) conclude a significant positive effect of internal marketing on market orientation and its sub-components including customer orientation, and inter-functional coordination. Even, Fonseca, Paço, and Figueiredo, (2020) assessed marketing orientation as a key strategy for the survival of non-profit organisations.

Scholarly research also proposes a strong impact of for-profit internal marketing on organisational commitment (Ling, 2004; Caruana and Calleya 2006; Souchon and Ling 2001). The approach proved to trigger motivation of staff (Farzad et al, 2008) and suggested a direct positive influence on the internal aspect of the performance of an organisation (Ling, 2004). Tsai and Wu (2006) found a significant positive impact of the internal marketing on perceived organisational commitment in the services context. Hung and Lin (2008) find the same evidence in the hotel industry. But the context of the non-profit sector is unique in this respect and hence may question the performance and employees' motivation related implications of market orientation as argued by many scholars (Gainer & Padanyi, 2005; Grinstein, 2008; Walker, Brewer, Boyne, & Avellaneda, 2011; Wymer, Knowles, & Gomes, 2006). This is true as scholars identify multiple ubiquities with the environment and operations of non-profit organisations like public sector universities (Krashinsky, 1997, 2003; Yorke, 1984). These peculiarities range from multiple stakeholders, non-financial objectives, mission driven culture and competitive-collaboration with the other market rivals. This diversity in stakeholders leads to complexity because of differences and sometimes conflict of interests hence, their nature and level of satisfaction. This is the reason that employees in the public services sector, like universities in this case, have their motivations other than the employees of the for-profit organisations. Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, and Balakrishnan (2016) identify social and organisational identifications as the key sources of students' commitment and their performance related implications. Similarly, empirical research

identifies other hedonic and psychological motivations for employee engagement and commitment in public sector services organisations (Barkhuizen, Rothmann, & Vijver, 2014; Yousef, 2017). These findings, contrary to the earlier discussion, question the role of internal marketing towards the organisational commitment of the employees in public sector universities.

Scholars suggest that there exists a lack of agreement in scholarly research on the relationship between market orientation and organisational commitment i.e., whether as antecedent or consequence and vice versa (Waris 2005; Caruana *et al.* 2012). There is no doubt and as recent literature (Bali, and Bélanger, 2019) suggests, that market orientation and marketing have several implications for the non-profit organisations. Some argue that in the context of personal selling an increase in internal marketing strategies is associated with a significant increase in organisational commitment (Jones *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand, scholarly research suggests organisational commitment as an antecedent to the organisational orientation towards the market (Sivaramakrishna *et al.*, 2008). The authors (Ibid) posit that a market oriented organisational culture usually originates and progressively develops through a market-based reward system. They base their argument on the significant impact of the organisation commitment of employee's market orientation. The performance and profitability related implications of market orientation are quoted in many research papers, both in for-profit and non-profit contexts (Farrell *et al.*, 2008; Subramanian *et al.*, 2009; Gonzalez-Benito *et al.*, 2002; Silva *et al.*, 2009; Qu, 2009;). There is however, a relative lack of consensus on the antecedents of market orientation as identified and discussed above.

Research considers market orientation in the non-profit public sector context as the organisational strategic approach, philosophy and orientation towards the market. A culture that guides the activities and behaviours of the employees towards the collection and dissemination of stakeholders' intelligence (beneficiaries, donors and other institutions) and responding in a way that leads to the achievement of the mission-oriented objectives (Gonzales *et al.*, 2002; Sargeant 2002, 2007 and Mulyanegara 2010; Casidy, 2014). Moreover, customer centric professional behaviours may lead to better value co-creation in the non-profit context (Williams, Biggemann, and Tóth, 2020). Multiple scholars have come up with diverse underlying factors that may lead to a market-oriented culture and behaviour within organisations (Schlosser and McNaughton, 2007; Santos- Halpern and Pagliari, 2007; Vijande *et al.*, 2005). These antecedents range from human resource practices, competitive intensity, and market opportunity to individual level antecedents and inter-organisational systems etc. The diversity of antecedents led scholar like (Sivaramakrishnan *et al.*, 2008 and Voola *et al.*, 2003; Dwairi, Bhuian, and Jurkus, 2007) to suggest further research into this direction. Consistent with the definition of market orientation as given above, this research builds on the scholarly understanding that the manifestation of market orientation without the strong commitment of employees from the top to the bottom may not be

ensured. This is particularly relevant in the public sector organisation where the performance and reward systems are more subjective and non-financial. Because such organisations are mission oriented and rely mostly on the voluntary behaviour rather than financial incentives for the employee motivation (Gainer & Padanyi, 2005; Wilkins et al., 2016; Yousef, 2017).

Based on the literary discussion on the interaction between the key variables of interest (the theoretical framework) and the associated research gap found in literature, this research puts forth the following hypotheses:

H₁: Internal marketing has a direct impact on employee market orientation in HEIs.

H₂: Organisational commitment moderates the relationship between internal marketing and employee market orientation in HEIs.

Methodology

The study population of the study includes the top-level executives in the establishment and departments of the public sector universities in Pakistan. These range from the registrar office to deputy registrars and coordinators, academics, establishment, examination, quality enhancement cells, and chairpersons and heads of the departments. The research investigators collected the data through snowball sampling. Our theoretical framework may not be easy to understand for all of the executives among our population. This is because of a relatively poor awareness of the concepts like internal marketing and market orientation public sector higher education context. Additionally, for a valid data collection it may be mandatory to identify and encourage respondents that for an adequate level of motivation to spare time and provide valid responses. Therefore, the researcher personally distributed the adapted questionnaire among the executives of the aforementioned offices/departments of our own university as well as two other universities initially. The research investigators carefully emphasised the concepts and bridged the data collection through a general set induction while carefully preventing response bias. Later the authors expanded the data through snowball sampling. The authors followed the general rule of thumb for the size of sample (1 item to 10 observations min.) keeping in view our analysis techniques that is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The number of items in the adapted and purified questionnaire were 32 with some demographic questions in addition. The researchers sent the questionnaires through both electronic and surface mails to the executive in the public sector universities in Pakistan (establishment and head of the departments) ranging from a minimum of 16 to a maximum of 42 per institution.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

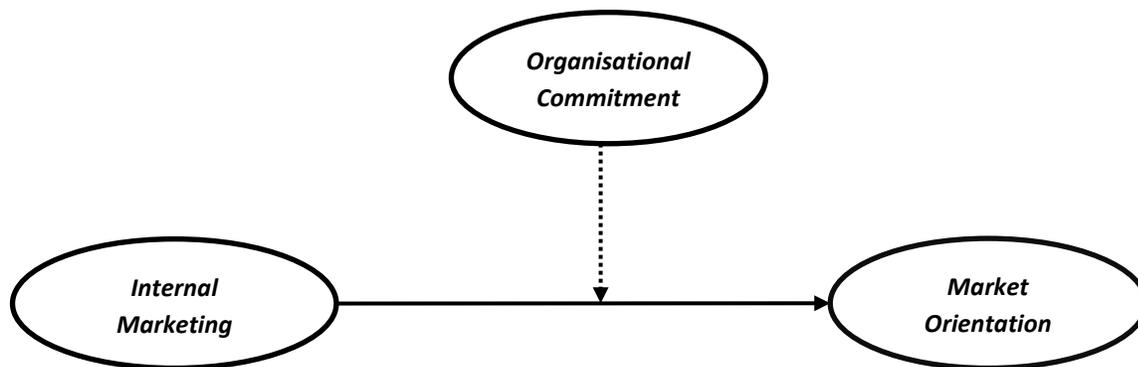
The research study used a composite questionnaire based on the integration of the market orientation, internal marketing and organisational commitment scales adopted from scholarly literature and dully purified. The final questionnaire was comprised of a few questions related to demographic information. Section two included the 20 items market orientation scale (Kohli and Jaworski, 1993) and section three had the 12 items internal marketing scale by Foreman and Money (1990) adapted and adjusted according to the context (1, 6 and 12 deleted). Finally, it included the 10 items organisational commitment scale (original scale 3 dimensions and 24 items) developed and validated by Allen and Mayer (1990). The aforementioned scales were an outcome of a focused group discussion among two academicians and two expert practitioners, who scrutinised and contextualised the scales to the public sector HE system of Pakistan. Later they were subject to a series of reliability and validity testing to refine and modify them for a valid and credible picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The total number of items in the composite framework appear to be (12 + 10 + 10) 32. Hence, the target response would be to get a return of at least 350 questionnaires for a valid data analysis.

Consistent with historical response rate in multiple scholarly research we expected a maximum response rate of 20-25% (Cannon and Perreault, 1999; Maignan and Ferrell, 2001). Therefore, we sent 1500 questionnaire to the target population in order to get at least 350 responses for the data analysis. The researcher received 376 questionnaires out of which 26 could not qualify for data analysis based on the limitations of missing data and incomplete information provision. The researcher also used the Armstrong and Overton (1977) technique to establish the generalisability of the data. The aforementioned procedure uses the fundamental supposition that late respondents are theoretically equal to non-respondents as long as they are significantly different. Hence, if the responses of early and late respondents are not statistically different, we take them as similar. We used independent sample t-test to establish the similarity of responses on and before the pre-identified date and post-date responses.

The researchers initially analysed the data for its reliability following Chronbach's alpha coefficient. Later, the researcher used the methodology of SEM as mentioned earlier to test the hypotheses of this research. Analysis was performed in two major phases i.e. in the initial phase the scales were validated (convergent and discriminant validity) following a Confirmatory Factor Analysis approach with SPSS AMOS (Figure). Table 1 below shows a comprehensive summary of the statistics that establish the convergent and discriminant validity of our scales. The scales refined and validated in the first phase were then subject to a comprehensive structural model analysis for testing the hypotheses mentioned below. The study considered both Chi-square and parsimonious fit indices to determine model fit determination. However, the author at the same

point acknowledges the recommendations of Jöreskog (1993) and Bollen (1990) who identify Chi-square to be problematic being sensitive to model and sample size. That is the reason we mainly focused on other and parsimonious fit indices for the validation of my model i.e., RMR, RMSEA, CFI, GFI and TLI. Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the conceptual frame (model) that we followed in our research.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model



Analysis and Discussion

All the 32 items in the three scales of Internal Marketing (IM), Organisational Commitment (OC) and Market Orientation (MO) were examined for their standard deviation, skewness, means and kurtosis. The majority of the means were found to be on the positive side of 4 on average indicating a generalised positive response to the scales. Similarly, the standard deviation measure also reflected overall patterns of narrow spread with values ranging from 1.01 to 1.34. The indices of skewness and kurtosis also showed smaller values than the recommended 3 and 10 respectively (Kline, 2015).

Reliability

Hair, Anderson, Babin, and Black (2010) suggest that four types of tests institute empirical research's quality that is, the four frequently used tests namely; reliability, internal validity, construct validity and external validity.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), reliability is the extent to which the findings and outcomes match and or are consistent and reliable when a particular test(s) is repeated under similar conditions. We used Cronbach alpha values, to gauge the reliability of the constructs as recommended by Hair et al., (2010) and Fornell, and Larcker (2010). We initial adjusted and

adapted the scales while establishing its face validity through expert opinion, pilot testing and initial inter-items correlations. This led to the compression of the multi-dimensional constructs into comprehensive unidimensional constructs with MO = 10 items, OC = 10 items and IM = 12 items respectively. Almost all of the items in each adapted unidimensional construct showed a higher extent of reliability crossing the “rules of thumb for interpreting alpha values I.e., 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). However, 1 item in the internal marketing scale, 1 in the OC and 1 in the MO scale had a reliability closer to but less than the rule of thumb (IM Scale item 4 alpha = 0.66, OC scale item 7 alpha = 0.69 and MO scale item 2 alpha value = 0.66). However, we did not delete these items as the alpha values for overall scales at individual levels at the same time were higher than 0.70 (IM = 0.87, OC = 0.82 and MO = 0.92).

Model Validation and Testing CFA (SEM)

As discussed in the methodology section we performed SEM in two major phases:

- a) Validation and testing of the measurement models and
- b) Analysis of the structural model

Using SPSS AMOS 21 the results of the 4 fit measures (i. (RMSEA), ii. goodness-of-fit Index (GFI), iii. Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and iv. Incremental Fit Index (IFI)) were used to establish the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement models. In addition, Average Variance Extracted was used to establish the discriminant validity of the constructs. Figure 2 below shows the graphical Amos output of CFA:

Figure 2 CFA output

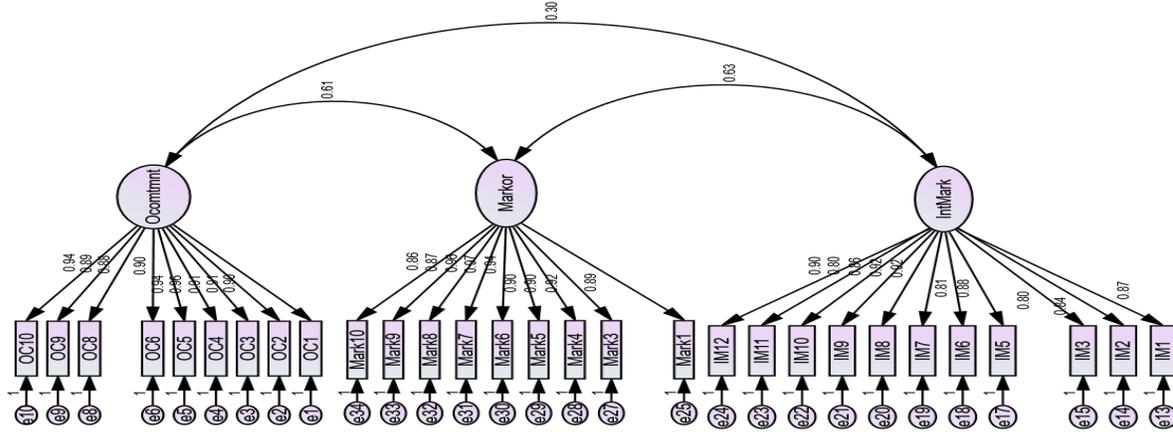


Table 1 provides a comprehensive picture of the CFA analysis output. As evident, almost all of the parameters are highly significant at a p-value of less than or equal to 0.05 with their respective t-value measuring greater than or closer to 2. However, several items in the multiple construct did not load properly. These items as discussed earlier also had poor reliability.

Table 1 CFA Statistics

Validity Output Measurement Model

	Standardised Factor Loadings	Factor Loadings Squared	P-values	AVE Items deleted	α -Value
<i>Internal Marketing</i>					
IM 1	0.87	0.76	***		
IM 2	0.84	0.71	***		
IM 3	0.80	0.67	***		
IM 4	0.48	0.23	***		
IM 5	0.88	0.77	***		
IM 6	0.81	0.66	***		
IM 7	0.89	0.79	***		
IM 8	0.92	0.85	***		
IM 9	0.92	0.85	***		
IM 10	0.86	0.74	***		
IM 11	0.80	0.64	***		
IM 12	0.90	0.81	***		

Correlation IM -OC = .3, Correlation IM -MO=.63, Correlation OC - MO = 0.61 **0.75** **0.87**

Org. Commitment

OC1	0.90	0.81	***
OC2	0.91	0.83	***
OC3	0.91	0.83	***
OC4	0.96	0.92	***
OC5	0.94	0.88	***
OC6	0.90	0.81	***
OC7	0.49	0.24	***
OC8	0.88	0.77	***
OC9	0.89	0.79	***
OC10	0.94	0.88	***
0.63 0.82			

Market Orientation

MO 1	0.89	0.79	***
MO 2	0.42	0.18	***
MO 3	0.92	0.85	***
MO 4	0.90	0.81	***
MO 5	0.90	0.81	***
MO 6	0.94	0.88	***
MO 7	0.97	0.94	***
MO 8	0.96	0.92	***
MO 9	0.87	0.71	***
MO 10	0.86	0.74	***
0.82 0.92			

They include item 4 in IM construct, item 7 in the OC and item 2 in the Market Orientation respectively (Figure 2 above). These are the items which also showed relatively poor reliability and hence they were deleted. Table 1 also shows the AVE values for each construct which are higher than 0.50 and the inert-construct correlations thus establishing convergent and discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, the r-square values were higher than 60% meaning the items explained more than 50% of the variance in their respective constructs (Hair *et al.*, (2010). The fit indices Table 2 as identified earlier also proved our model to be a good fit with the data.

Table 2: Goodness of Fit Value for Model

Table 2 Model Fit Indices

Index Name	Cut off	Finding	Interpretation
χ^2 - Chi-Square		121.33	Unfit
χ^2/df	> 2 and < 5	121.33/32	Fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.045	Fit
GFI	Closer to 1	0.946	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.974	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.948	Fit

The value of chi-square is higher and proved a bad fit, but the test is steadily identified as misleading and problematic therefore, based on other fit measures (Table 2 above) it can be declared that the model offers a good fit with the gathered data.

Analysis of the Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

Following Hu and Bentler's (1999) recommendations, we used "Root Mean Residual (RMR) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) as the measures of absolute fit and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and as indices of incremental fit". The structural model also offered a relatively better fit with the data [$\chi^2 = 136.23$; TLI=.922; GFI = .946 CFI=.982; RMSEA=.023; RMR= .094]. As evident, the output shows a good fit for the structural model. The Chi-square value too is less than the tabulated value and shows a good fit. This is probably because of the deletion of the problematic items from each construct.

For a detailed emphasis on use and modelling of moderation through interaction in structural equation modelling, readers are directed to follow Bollen (1989), Hayduk (1987) and Bagozzi, and Yi (1988). The authors (Ibid) comprehend that researchers may require two AMOS runs. As it is assumed that the first model is nested in the second where the formed variable for interaction is incorporated as an indicator. The Chi-square values difference was computed to model the moderating effect of OC on the IM, MO relationship.

Figure 3

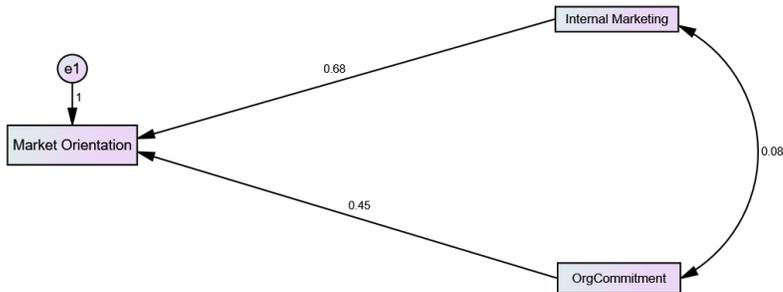
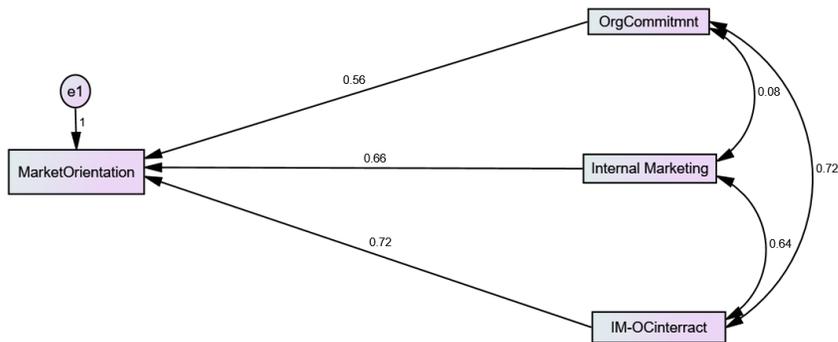


Figure 4



Consistently Figure 3 and Figure 4 above represent the two models. The initial model portrays the direct effect of IM and OC on MO. When the two relationships were found significant, another analysis of the model was performed with the introduction of the interaction term. As evident from

Table 3 below, the Chi-square difference clearly confirms the moderating effect of OC in the IM-MO relationship.

Table 3 Interaction effect

Weights			S. Estimate	Std Error	T-value	P-value
MO	<---	Z-IM	.66	.124	8.36	***
MO	<---	IM_OC	.72	.044	6.54	***
MO	<---	Z-OC	.56	.322	4.52	***
<i>Chi-square statistics</i>			Default $\chi^2 = 469.372$ - Const $\chi^2 = 240.362$ χ^2 Diff. = 229.10			

Conclusion and Recommendations

Both scholars and practitioners today acknowledge the effective strategic role of internal marketing in the educational institutes' market orientation as culture and behaviour. However, effective internal marketing may lead to multiple positive professional behaviour related outcomes like job involvement, motivation, citizenship behaviour and emotional intelligence etc.

The findings above lead to the acceptance of our main research hypothesis about the moderating effect of OC in the relationship between the internal marketing orientation. The role of employees in the overall success of higher education institutions is vital in every respect. However, without proper motivation and hence commitment, employees may not perform well to the expectations of their management and hence may lead to poor market-oriented culture and behaviour. Our findings are consistent with the other scholarly evidence that shows a significant role of organisational commitment related factors like job involvement, motivation and organisational citizenship behaviour as vital for the internal marketing activities (Panigyrakis and Theodoridis, 2009; Tansuhaj, Randall, and McCullough, 1991; Jain, Giga, and Cooper, 2009; Rafiq and Ahmad, 2000).

This research may offer significant theoretical contributions in the following aspects: a) The framework of the market orientation is adapted to the public sector that is non-profit context of the universities. b) The finding may also theoretically contribute to the validation of antecedents of the market orientation framework. c) In addition, the outcome may facilitate decision makers at university level to formulate effective strategies for employees' motivation, inter-functional coordination and better value creation in response to market requirements.

The author at the same time suggests managers to consider contextual realities and actualities of the environment in higher education institutions. The key consideration here is to devise such



internal marketing and employees' development strategies that recognise and acknowledge the social-cultural and economic realities of these institutions as well as that of the customer and the market. Only then, the internal marketing practices may ensure positive market-oriented outcomes. The practice may require developing an organisational mission and job description that in addition to target markets recognise the importance and value of their employees. The management must believe in value as the output of an inside out process stemming from the internal social and psychological standing of the employees. Similarly, in addition to internal marketing the incentives and reward system may also be redesigned and reformulated to develop positive organisational commitment and will increase the effectiveness of internal marketing strategies.

This research utilised the responses from a representative sample of the administrative staff of the universities from the establishment to multiple department heads etc. Following a survey design, the study performed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) on the data to achieve its research objectives and address its research question. However, the author acknowledges several limitations at the same time that are; using a cross sectional design may not ensure better explanation of the phenomenon under investigation. Future researchers should utilise longitudinal designs to investigate the behavioural change related implications in a real time context. In addition, the survey instrument has been adapted from previous research and is formulated in developed countries hence; they may not provide exact responses of the respondents. Scholarly efforts may formulate and develop context specific instruments to justify social-cultural diversity of meanings related to the phenomena under investigation. Finally, this research also has some design limitations, future researchers should also focus on other behavioural aspect e.g., organisational citizenship behaviour that may moderate and/or mediate the aforementioned relationships.

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