

Leader Motivating Language as Predictor of Organizational Commitment among Generation Y Teachers: The Mediating Role of Organizational Climate

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether leader motivating language at workplace creates a positive organizational climate which enhances the organizational commitment of generation Y employees by creating a positive organizational climate. Cross sectional data is collected from sample of 335 teachers in age group 21-37 years, as defined for generation Y, working in private schools of Multan, Pakistan. The empirical analysis shows that all three forms of motivating language impact organizational commitment; and organizational climate significantly mediates the relationship between leader motivating language and organizational commitment. This indicates that commitment of millennial teachers can be increased by principal's effective use of motivating language and a positive school climate. Also, the Meaning-making language dimension most predicts the teacher commitment. The theoretical implications of this study target young teacher's commitment, which is a phenomenon needing expansive research. The proposed framework of the variables is also unique and addresses gap in literature by investigating the mediating effects of school climate. Practically, this study is fruitful for those schools aiming to boost teacher's commitment leading to better quality of education provided by them.

Keywords: Leader motivating language, organizational climate, organizational commitment, generation Y

Introduction

Today's dynamic business environment poses a challenge to organization's sustainability, demanding recognition of value of Human Resources (Hafiza *et al.*, 2011). It is important to focus on commitment of employees to get maximum output from them (Balkar, 2015), especially young workers (Mahoney, 2015) who have more tendency to switch jobs as compared to previous generations (Mahoney, 2015; Plessis, 2010; Basset, 2008).

For any society, the most important organizational setup is 'a school'. For which students are the input, teachers act as process and qualified work is the output of the organization (Celep, 2000). Teacher's positive energy and top notch performance can prove a driving force in developing and maintaining an effective school system, so this draws attention towards the educational sector. However, the increasing trend of high

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turnover rate in Pakistan in teaching profession (Khan & Qadir, 2016), especially by the generation Y teachers (Akram & Bilal, 2013) has become a major concern to retain them (Benson, 2016).

Many researchers have worked on theories regarding leadership styles but there are limited studies in context of motivating language (Alhaqtani, 2015; Owens & Valesky, 2014). This phenomenon needs to be replicated in non-US parts of world (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018, Haroon & Akbar, 2016). Constructs of school climate and teachers commitment needs further research (Douglas, 2010; Smith, 2009). Hannus (2016) suggested to study Millennials regarding how they are motivated and to change this motivation into organizational commitment (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; McCann & Giles, 2006). Crosswell (2006) proposed that it is need of time to address the concept of organizational commitment in context of teacher commitment. Generation Y workers long for rewarding relationships with their employers and want to be guided by constant and frequent feedback (Hewlet & Kuhl, 2016; Martin & Tulgan, 2006). In short, they have characteristic of seeking social support in their jobs. Hence, this research will attempt to see how leader talk, a form of social support (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018), can impact organizational commitment of young teachers.

The high attrition rate in Private sector of Pakistan (Akram & Bilal, 2013) clearly indicates that some schools are probably facing teacher commitment issues (Khan and Qadir, 2016; De Long, 2004). These low levels of commitment yield negative effects on performance of teachers, eventually leading to quitting and looking for another job (Celep, 2000). This has created many problems for the schools, such as loss of valuable personnel, difficulty in finding suitable and skilled employees, hiring & replacement expenses and training costs for the same job again and again (Abdallah et al., 2017; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). Such trend of low commitment is more common among the young workers who do not feel committed to remain with one organization for extended period of time (Pyoria et al., 2017, Mun & Abdullah, 2016; Plessis, 2010). So, this study aims to address this problem by examining the impact of the motivating language by the leader (school principal) on young teacher's commitment.

The main objective behind this study is to investigate the impact of leader motivating language on organizational commitment of young teachers with mediation of Organizational Climate of Schools among young teachers and specifically which dimension of motivating language predicts teacher commitment the most? Moreover, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of leader motivating language (LML) on organizational commitment?
2. What is the effect of organizational climate on organizational commitment?

3. How leader motivating language influences organizational commitment with the mediation of organizational climate?
4. The commitment of young teachers is most predicted by which one of the three language dimensions?

This research adds contribution to theory by anticipating the underlying mechanism in the relationship of LML and organizational commitment using organization climate as a mediator. This unique integration of variables needs to be empirically tested in the educational sector of Pakistan, specifically targeting generation Y teachers. This study will provide valuable feedback to the management of schools regarding decisions in language choice by the heads/ leaders to create such positive environment in schools to boost their teacher's long life commitment. Also, this will serve as a guideline to stimulate the mental model of the teachers, who will become school leaders in the future. Consequently, there will be better quality of teachers and students and more avenues for school success.

Literature Review

Organizational Commitment

Mowday *et al.* (1979) defined Organizational Commitment as having a strong belief and accepting the goals and values of organization, being willing to put in maximum input for the organization and strongly desiring to stay as a member of the organization". Meyer & Allen (1991) suggested that Organizational Commitment has three dimensions: Affective Commitment: degree of an employee's feelings of emotional attachment with organization, Continuance Commitment: the need felt by an employee to stay with organization keeping in mind the costs they will have to incur as a result of leaving organization, and Normative Commitment: sense of obligation possessed by an employee to work in the specific organization. They postulated that a committed employee will exhibit more positive work behavior.

Crosswell (2006) argued that Meyer & Allen model of Organizational Commitment lacks to cover some important areas of teaching so it is necessary to extend this concept beyond mere organizational commitment to specific teacher commitment. Hence, organizational commitment can be conceptualized as teacher commitment (Crosswell, 2006; Tsui & Cheng, 1999; Louis, 1998) as teachers are employees of school being an organization (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2013; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001)).

Teacher Commitment comprises of inter-related multi-dimensions, as researched by Singh & Billingsley (1998), Louis (1998), Somech & Bogler (2002), Nir (2002), Cevat Celep (2000) and Thein, Razak & Ramyah (2014). They developed a scale for measuring teacher commitment and categorized it into: Commitment to Students, Commitment to Teaching, Commitment to School, and Commitment to Profession. Many

internal (e.g., motivation and values) and external (e.g., leaders and school climate) factors influence teacher commitment (Crosswell, 2006) respectively.

Leader Motivating Language

Language is main channel of leader- follower communication through which leaders shares their vision and goals for organizational success (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018; Louis, 2017). Leader talk has been declared an antecedent to positive work behavior (Raina & Roebuck, 2014; Thomas *et al.*, 2009). The theory supporting construct of Leader's verbal communication is MLT (Motivating Language Theory). It was put forward by Professor Jeremiah Sullivan (1988) and is grounded on axiom that effective communicative pattern can entice psychological responses that can be translated into better organizational outcomes like attendance, voice, trust, performance, commitment and job satisfaction (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018).

MLT originated from linguistic theory of Speech Act which was postulated by Oxford philosopher Austin in 1962 and American philosopher Searle in 1969 (Nordquist, 2017). MLT is a comprehensive model that manages leader's communication patterns logically (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012). LISREL analysis was done by Mayfield *et al.*, (1998), to prove MLT and develop scale widely used now.

MLT categorizes leader-to-follower language into three dimensions which are referred to as Hand, Heart and Spirit of leader speech. Hands refer to pre-locutionary (direction-giving language i.e., reducing work-related ambiguities), heart refers to illocutionary (empathetic language i.e., relationship building at workplace) and spirit refers to locutionary (meaning-making language i.e., cultural transmission) Mayfield & Mayfield, (2018). These forms have individual contribution towards achieving favorable organizational outcomes, however synergistically they will prove more strategically useful Mayfield & Mayfield, (2018).

Generalizability of MLT is across various national cultural groups, especially in Asian cultures as demonstrated by studies of Dr. Joanna Winska (2014) in Poland, Alhaqtani (2015) in Kuwait, Madlock & Sexton (2015) in Mexico and Kunie *et al.* (2017) in Japan Mayfield & Mayfield, (2018).

Many researchers have proved that motivating language yields fruitful effects on key employee outcomes Mayfield & Mayfield, (2018), Refozar *et al.*, (2017), Kunie *et al.*, (2017), Sun, Pan & Ho (2016), Haroon & Akbar, (2016), Simmons & Sharbrough, (2013).

Leadership is an antecedent to organizational commitment Mayfield & Mayfield, (2002), Glisson & Durick, (1988). Motivating language is a relationship building language that boosts trust between leader and follower Mayfield *et al.*, (1998). Trust leads to demonstration of employee commitment Louis, (2017). Motivating language

strengthens a worker's intention to stay Mayfield & Mayfield, (2007). A committed employee is likely to have a long stay with the organization Louis, (2017) and Othman & Kasuma, (2017). Madlock & Sexton (2015) and Louis (2017) also proved empirically that motivating language and organizational commitment are positively linked.

School Principal employs the three forms of language when they explain school's culture to teachers or use encouraging words or clarify task and give feedback Alhaqtani, (2015). School principal's successful leadership contributes to a committed faculty Reza *et al.*, (2013), Collie, Shapka, & Perry, (2011), Smith, (2009), Sinden, Hoy, & Sweetland, (2004), Tsui & Cheng, (1999), Colodarci, (1992), Tarter (1989). The present study therefore hypothesizes that:

H1: Leader Motivating Language is positively related to organizational commitment

Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is the holistic description of organization determined by perceptions of its members depending on its characteristics (Henry, 2017; Giles, 2010; Dawson *et al.*, 2008; Hoy *et al.*, 1991). Schools have unique climates with distinct image and personality (Douglas, 2010) just like an individual. This is actually the organizational climate of school or simply school climate (Anderson, 1982; Halpin & Croft, 1963).

Two frameworks to measure the school climate are; openness and health (Smith, 2009). Halpin & Croft (1963), pioneers of school climate, developed an instrument to measure it called OCDQ (Organizational Climate Description questionnaire) on the basis of the perception of teachers (Othman & Kasuma, 2017). Four types of school climate were conceptualized along a continuum that ranges from open to close (Douglas, 2010; Hoy *et al.*, 1991).

The other framework is for checking health of school climate with the instrument OHI (Organizational Health Index) designed by Hoy *et al.* (1991). A healthy school is one which grows inspite of the challenges it faces (Douglas, 2010).

Openness and health are two different frameworks, but they are inter-related (Douglas, 2010). OCDQ measures climate with reference to relationship between principal and teacher. OHI measures climate considering relationship between school, students and community. A healthy School will have an open climate and vice versa (Hoy *et al.*, 2002). Combining both, Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland (2002) developed an instrument called Organizational Climate Index (OCI) with four dimensions collegial leadership, teacher professionalism, academic press and institutional vulnerability.

Collegial leadership is related to professional treatment of teachers by Principal. Teacher professionalism extends to teacher-to-teacher coordination. Academic press refers to relationship between school and student's academic success. Institutional

vulnerability is extent to which school is under pressure from parents and community (Othman & Kasuma, 2017; Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland 2002).

Positive characteristics of an organization are predictors of commitment (Shukla & Rai, 2015; Glisson & Durick, 1988). Same is the case with a school (Crosswell, 2006; Riehl & Sipple 1996). Empirical researches by Othman & Kasuma (2017); Raman, Ling & Khalid (2015); Najeemah (2012); Douglas (2010) and Smith (2009) showed that a positive relation exists between school climate and teacher commitment. In sum, it is hypothesized as:

H2: Organizational Climate has a positive relation with Organizational Commitment

Organizational climate can be used as a mediating variable since prior researches have documented positive relation between motivating language and school climate (Alhaqtani, 2015; Alipour, 2011; Alhaqtani & Alajmi, 2010; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009). A school leader shapes up climate of a school (Alhaqtani, 2015). He empirically proved that all forms of motivating language positively influence the school climate. Hence, it is hypothesized:

H3: Leader Motivating Language has a statistically significant relationship with Organizational Commitment through Organization Climate as a mediator

Generation Theory

A Generation (Gen) is a group which has a particular span of birth years with shared views linked to social or historical events (Cogin, 2012). In today's workplace, four generations exist (Mahoney, 2015).

- Traditionalists: born before 1946
- Baby Boomers: born between 1946-1964
- Gen X: born between 1965-1980
- Gen Y: born between 1981-2000

Gen Y or Millennials, the Nexters, Google Generation is largest and recent work force today (Lieber, 2010). They possess several characteristics like confidence and entrepreneurial qualities (Twenge & Campbell, 2012), technology- pro (Martins & Martins, 2014; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), want meaningful work assignments (Cogin, 2012), preferring flexible work arrangements more than heavy salary (Pyoria *et al.*, 2017; Chou, 2012; Twenge & Campbell, 2012), more adaptability for cultural diversity (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), and are achievement oriented (Hannus, 2016).

Millennials have tendency to build strong relations with dedicated and friendly rather than authoritative leaders (Cogin, 2012) and that forms the basis for their job satisfaction and commitment. They want frequent and fair feedback (Hannus 2016). They look for open and transparent communications (Hannus 2016) which develops trust in them (Maccoby, 2000) to boost their commitment (Hannus 2016).

Millennials switch jobs more than their parent cohorts (Martins & Martins, 2014; Guthridge et al., 2008; Broadbridge, Maxwell & Ogden, 2007). They have more tendency to feel committed to an individual (leader) rather than organization (Hannus, 2016; Lieber 2010). Hence, this leader-follower bond can be used to create a positive work climate and nurture feelings of commitment for organization. Organizational climate may have a vital role as underlying mechanism in motivating language-commitment relationship and this study aims to further research this gap.

Research Model

This study proposes and tests a model of leader motivating language and organizational climate as drivers of organizational commitment premising Motivating Language Theory (MLT).

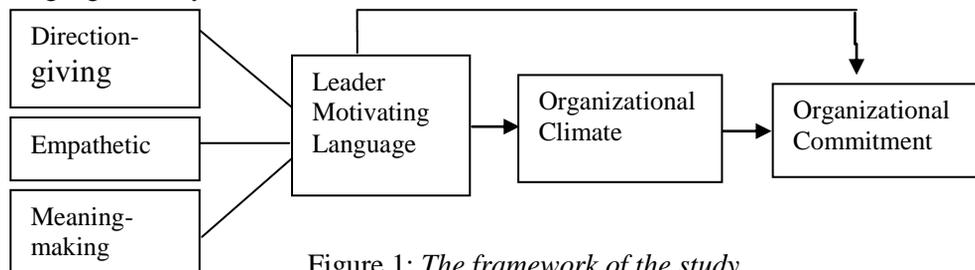


Figure 1: *The framework of the study*

Data and Methodology

This study predicts the impact of leader motivating language in making employees committed by creating a positive organizational climate, using cross sectional data.

Sampling

Depending on the research objective and questions, target population is the Generation Y Schools Teachers. This study uses non-probability technique for sampling as this is practical for use in Social Science Researches when there are limited resources for randomization (Trochim, 2006). Multi-stage Sampling was done for this purpose. In the first stage, six Private Schools, including the separate campuses of Toddlers, Girls and Boys Branches, were chosen on the basis of Convenient Sampling from the city of Multan, Pakistan. In the second stage, Homogeneous Purposive Sampling technique was used to select sample of 'young teachers' as this seemed most suitable for a sample with subjects having similar characteristics (Etikan, Musa & Allkassim, 2016) on the pre-defined basis of age, job-type and social views. Hence, data was collected from 'Teaching staff in private Academic Institutions of Multan with age group (21-37)'. For the sample size, Chou and Bentler (1987) formula was used. The number of items was multiplied by 5 and a total sample of 335 respondents is used.

Instruments

Survey instruments used for variables were adopted from scales already published and validated. For leader motivating language, scale developed by Mayfield *et al.* (1998) consisting of 24 items was used. α (alpha) is .95, .97 and .93 for three sub-scales representing three dimensions of motivating language respectively. OCI for measuring school climate developed by Hoy, Smith & Sweetland (2002) with α values .94, .88, .92 and .87 for Collegial Leadership, Teacher professionalism, Achievement Press and Institutional Vulnerability respectively with 30 items was used. To measure commitment of teachers, scale developed by Thein, Razak & Ramayah (2014) was used with 13 items; α is .89, .82, .73 and .71 for Commitment to School, Students, Teaching and Profession, respectively. All scales used 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree (coded with 1) to strongly disagree (coded with 5).

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data through structured questionnaire was collected for the research. For this purpose, permission was sought from respondents who volunteered to participate and were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The response rate was 92% and 308 questionnaires were returned back. 300 questionnaires were found appropriate for data analysis after scrutiny.

Data was entered using SPSS version 22 for analysis in three phases. Descriptive Statistics in first phase, then EFA, Reliability Tests and descriptive measures of variables in second phase with Correlation, Linear Regression and Mediation testing through Barron and Kenny Approach in the third phase.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

Sample descriptions are according to age, gender, education, marital status, number of years working in same job, number of years working in same organization and number of direct supervisors. Out of 300 respondents, 75% are female and 25% are male. Overall teachers are in pre-defined age group 21-37; however 46.3% of them are of 26-31 years of age, so they can be accurately classified as young teachers. 62% are single out of them. 79% have Master level education so this means that they are highly educated. 53.3% have teaching experience of 5-10 years so they have capacity to give reliable responses. 63.3% are working in same school for less than 5 years and 26.7% for 5-10 years. 40.7% reported to one superior and the rest to more depending on structure of schools included in survey. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations among variables are reported in Table 1. It is evident that the variables are positively correlated to each other ($p < .01$). Motivating Language is positively correlated to Organizational Commitment with the value of (.429**). Organizational Climate is also positively

correlated to Motivating Language and Organizational Commitment with the values of (.585**) and (.504**) respectively. Cronbach’s alpha values are above .70 and composite reliabilities are above .80 so the measures are reliable for use.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Reliability Coefficients (N=300)*

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CR	1	2	3
1 LML	2.0208	.14184	.964	(.936)		
2 OCL	2.0767	.26186	.969	.585**	(.922)	
3 OCM	2.3538	.25369	.938	.429**	.504**	(.808)

Reliability coefficients for the scales are in parentheses along the diagonal, ** correlation $p < .01$

Factor Analysis

Second phase of research is factor analysis of the main variables. Initially, 24 items were taken for motivating language construct for EFA and six components yielded Eigen value more than 1 and accounted for total 81% of variability. However, all items were retained since all had factor loadings more than cut off value of .50 (Hair *et al.*, 1998). Organizational Climate consisted of 30 items and EFA yielded nine components which explained 88.67% of variability and 28 items were retained. All 13 items were retained of Organizational Commitment as all had good value of λ and four components yielded 71.5% of variability.

Hypothesis testing

On the basis of literature and research questions, hypothesis was tested using Linear Regression. Assumptions for Regression were tested after checking and treating outliers.

First, Normality was checked using Normal Q-Q Plots and Shapiro-Wilk. The statistics showed values of 0.941, 0.937 and 0.901 respectively ($p > .05$) for variables which are relatively close to 1 indicating data to be normally distributed. Normal Q-Q plots showed that majority points were close to line of normality with no strong deviations. Secondly, Scatter Plot between IV on x-axis and DV on y-axis was checked which confirmed linear relationship between them. Presence of multi-collinearity between IVs was checked through Tolerance Level and VIF. No excessive multi-collinearity was found. Homoscedasticity was examined by a scatter-plot of standardized residuals and standardized predicting values that showed random dispersion of dots spread around zero. So, this assumption was fulfilled. Finally, Auto-correlation was checked by Durbin-Watson values which came out 2.145 and 2.352 for motivating language and organizational climate. These values are in acceptable range and there is no autocorrelation in the data. Hence, Regression could be run on the data.

H1 and H2 were tested using Linear Regression. Barron & Kenny’s step-by-step approach (1986) was used to test the mediation model shown by H3. The analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results for Regression (N=300)

	OCM			
	OCL	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
LML	.585**	.429**		.204**
OCL			.504**	.385**
R ²	.343	.184	.254	.281
Adjusted R ²	.340	.181	.252	.277
S.E.	.087	.094	.048	.059
t-value	12.461**	8.198**	10.079**	6.348**
F	155.265**	67.206**	101.593**	58.180**

** $p < .01$

For Hypothesis H1, the value of $B=.767$ and $\beta=.429$ which indicates that every 1 unit change in LML will produce .767 units change in Organizational Commitment and strength between the two variables is 42.9% in positive direction. Value of Adjusted R² is .181 which shows that 18.1% model has been explained. So, H1 is supported with p value (.000).

For Hypothesis H2, the value of $B=.488$ and $\beta=.504$ which shows that 1 unit change in Organizational Climate will produce .488 units change in Organizational Commitment and strength of relationship between them is 50.4% in positive direction. The value of Adjusted R² is .252, which shows that 25.2% model is explained with p value (0.000). Hence, H2 is substantiated.

The t-values are greater than 2 as per 2- t rule of thumb as shown in the table. Both the significant t and F-values point that predictors explain well the variance in dependant variable. Hence, the proposed positive relationships between variables are confirmed and results comply with previous researches.

Mediation Analysis

As suggested by Barron & Kenny Mediation Step-by-Step approach (1986), for mediation four conditions need to be proved. (1) IV must predict Mediator, (2) IV must predict DV, (3) Mediator must predict DV, (4) IV must predict DV when mediator is controlled. Above table supports these conditions. When mediator was included in this model, the effects of IV were reduced, though remained significant, hence suggesting partial mediation. Sobel test was performed to check significance of mediation. Result showed that mediating effect of organizational climate for motivating language-commitment relationship (Indirect Effect=.403, Sobel $t=5.63$, $p<.01$) is significant. Hence, Hypothesis H3 is confirmed.

An important contribution of this study was to see which dimension of motivating language predicts most the commitment of teachers. For this a separate

regression analysis was run and meaning making language was found to be most likely to predict albeit all three forms contributed to teacher commitment as a whole.

Table 3: *Regression of motivating language Dimensions on Commitment (N=300)*

Dependant Variable	Direction-giving β	Empathetic language β	Meaning-making β
	.204**	.376**	.431**

**p<.01

Theoretical Implications

This study makes multiple contributions to literature. Firstly, the study addresses gap in literature by studying mediating effects of organizational climate. Although there are researches on these variables, but their focus was on direct relationship and not on interplay.

Secondly, this study has integrated Motivating language, organizational climate and organizational commitment into academic settings and has been investigated these concepts from lens of school climate and teacher commitment. Thirdly, this study contributes significantly in context of its sample as the Millennials are the current workforce and future leaders and hence this domain needs exploration.

Practical Implications

Practically, this study has implications for school management. In an increasingly dynamic work environment, retention of capable human resource is critical. Building a supportive school climate is an effective way of increasing psychological bonding of teachers to enhance positive work-related outcomes like commitment.

This study gives a concrete insight of recognizing importance of accurate language choice and to rectify deficiencies in their communicational strategies. It will be best to involve teachers with the school through reasonable scope of decision-making and customized professional learning and development as this is valued by Millennials’.

Conclusion

The agenda behind this research is to understand impact of motivating language on commitment of young teachers and to develop a unique combination of variables for testing this relationship with a mediator (school climate). This research reinforced existing MLT via quantitative testing and found positive relations further confirming to previous researches on this phenomena. The results showed that teachers of schools that were surveyed perceived both motivating language and school climate moderately which has contributed a moderate amount of commitment in them. However, the school Heads must strategically use this influential language in order to maintain and increase this commitment by cascading a healthy school climate. Also, those academic institutions who are currently confronted with retention issues can benefit from this.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study makes significant contributions to theory and practice, it also suffers from a few limitations. First is demography of sample as it is limited to Multan city. This study can be conducted in other cities like Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi where there is a bigger avenue with large number of private schools and teachers. Secondly, there is a possibility of respondent bias even though they were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Thirdly, this research is time and budget bound. With more time span and resources, sample size could have been increased and qualitative analysis could have been conducted.

Future researchers can use this study as a starting point to investigate links between motivating language and other employee outcomes or expanding by addition of moderators or other mediators. This study needs further confirmation using longitudinal methods instead of cross-sectional. Future researches must recognize these phenomena as multi-dimensional and testify them accordingly. Also, a survey of Principal's motivating language skills can be conducted to identify their level of language mastery as few discrepancies were observed during the study. This is a way for assessment of their training needs to devise and inculcate accurate Motivating Language skill Development plans for them.

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