

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN WORK ALIENATION
AND EMPLOYEE LEARNING
BEHAVIOR: A MODERATED
MEDIATION MODEL OF
ALIENATIVE COMMITMENT AND
POLITICAL SKILL**

SOHAIL MAQBOOL

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary times, organizations place great emphasis on learning and development to remain competitive and innovative amidst constantly evolving environment. Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this thesis examines how two facets of work alienation—work powerlessness and work meaninglessness—shape employee learning behavior via alienative commitment, and whether political skill buffers these effects. Three-wave, time-lag data from 397 nurses across 26 District Headquarters Hospitals in Punjab, Pakistan were analyzed using SEM (AMOS 24) and moderated-mediation tests (PROCESS in SPSS 25). Results show that work powerlessness and work meaninglessness are each positively related to alienative commitment; alienative commitment, in turn, is negatively related to employee learning behavior. Political skill weakens the links from (a) powerlessness to alienative commitment and (b) meaninglessness to alienative commitment, yielding a significant conditional indirect (moderated-mediation) effect on learning. Theoretically, the study re-centers alienation and alienative commitment in the learning literature, clarifies a resource-loss pathway that depresses discretionary learning, and identifies political skill as a personal resource that constrains loss spirals. Practically, the findings offer actionable levers for public hospitals—enhancing autonomy and role meaning, and developing staff political skill—to sustain learning under resource pressure and role ambiguity.

Keywords: Work alienation, alienative commitment, employee learning behavior, COR theory, structural equation modeling, moderated mediation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS	ii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction of the Study	1
1.2 Public Healthcare Sector in Pakistan	17
1.3 Role of Nurses in Public Healthcare Sector in Pakistan	20
1.4 Problem Statement	22
1.5 Research Objectives	24
1.6 Research Questions	25
1.7 Significance of the Study	25
1.8 Operational definitions of the understudy constructs	27
1.8.1 Work Powerlessness	27
1.8.2 Work Meaninglessness	27
1.8.3 Alienative Commitment	27
1.8.4 Employee Learning Behavior	27
1.8.5 Political Skill	27
1.9 Delimitations of the Study	28
1.10 Summary of the Chapter	28
1.11 Structure of the Thesis	29
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	30
2.1 Outline of the Chapter	30
2.2 Employee Learning Behavior	30
2.3 Work Alienation: An Overview	39
2.3.1 Work Alienation among Nurses	53
2.4 Alienative Commitment	57
2.5 Political Skill	62

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of the Study

In today's dynamic and complex business environment, organizations rely on employees who can learn and apply their knowledge to changing situations (Bresman, 2010; Yoon & Kayes, 2016). This enhances the ability of employees and organizations to adapt to the environment and leads to improved performance (Kozlowski, Chao, & Jensen, 2010; Yoon & Kayes, 2016). Due to its importance, organizations invest billions of dollars in formal systems to facilitate employee learning, with the United States alone spending approximately \$150 billion annually on learning-related activities (Yoon & Kayes, 2016). The perception of individual learning by employees, which reflects their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies for their career development, is considered a crucial psychological and behavioral mechanism for individuals and organizations to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in turbulent environments (Yoon & Kayes, 2016).

Employee learning behavior has become a central focus for organizations striving to maintain a competitive edge in rapidly evolving industries. In a world where knowledge is constantly being updated, and business conditions shift frequently, organizations need employees who are not only capable of learning but also able to apply that knowledge in real-time (Yoon & Kayes, 2016). The ability of employees to adapt, develop new skills, and contribute innovative solutions is essential for organizational success and sustainability. However, fostering such behavior goes beyond formal training programs; it requires a supportive work environment, motivated individuals, and effective leadership that can create an atmosphere where learning is encouraged, valued, and integrated into the daily workflow (Kozlowski et al., 2010).

Additionally, the psychological and organizational factors that influence employee learning behavior are critical for understanding how to maximize learning outcomes. Factors such as employee empowerment, work meaningfulness, and feelings of autonomy are believed to significantly affect learning engagement and performance (Yoon & Kayes, 2016). Employees who feel a sense of control over their work and