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## Impact of Training and Development Programs on Employee Performance through Individual Learning: Moderating Role of Affective Commitment

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*Keywords:*

Training and Development Programs, Affective Commitment, Individual learning, Employee Performance

*ABSTRACT*

In Pakistan, healthcare organizations mainly hospitals are focusing on continuing education and training of their nursing staff through several technical and non-technical training programs. However, the management misperceives the outcomes of training and development programs, believing that training and development directly influences the employee performance, whereas the results are different. It is thus, the primary aim of this research is to establish a critical path starting from T&D programs to EP. In order to test the hypothesized relationships, a quantitative cross-sectional study was carried out through a survey-based questionnaire, data was collected from 201 nurses working in different departments of the Shifa hospital. PROCESS macro was used to test the direct and indirect effects. The results show a positive and significant relation between T&D programs and EP. A mediating effect of Individual Learning (IL) is also found but the moderating effect of Affective Commitment (AC) is found to be insignificant between T&D programs and IL but found significant between IL and EP. The research results helped in establishing a critical path between T&D programs and EP. Findings of this research are useful for researchers, organizational management, human resource department and practitioners, training and development departments, training providers, organizational policy makers and quality assurance department.

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## INTRODUCTION

To develop and upgrade knowledge and skills of organizations employees Kuruppu et al. (2021) identified training programs as a powerful weapon among others HR practices. Similarly, due to its ability to improve individual learning Mahadevan and Yap (2019) concluded that training is the most critical HR practice in organization among others. The clue behind this important is that; when skills,

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knowledge and attitudes gained from trainings are applied by individual employee this become part of organizational values (Mpofu and Hlatywayo 2015, Smith and Hayton, 1999) and this shared behaviors positively affect employee individual and group performance. So, overlooking training and development programs might decrease lifetime of employees' skills and knowledge Waheed et al. (2017), which affects employee performance negatively. This view is also supported by Smith and Hayton (1999), who asserted that training as a strategic practice improve employee performance. Thus, organizations that carefully design the training and development programs based on job's specific needs and demands are successful and update and upgrade employee performance (Elnaga and Imran, 2013). However, one question that needs to be asked is whether providing training to non-committed employees will improve their performance? It is therefore, we argue that the relationship between training and employee performance is complex and a mediating and moderating or moderating mediating effects exist between training and employee performance. For instance, training and development programs affect employee learning if he/she is psychologically committed to organization, this individual learning in the presence of affective commitment is explaining the relationship between training and employee performance. Thus, it is proposed that training providing to employees who are psychological committed (affective commitment) to organization will positively affect their performance which in turns will lead to organizational performance. This relationship has been also proposed by Waheed et al. (2017) in their conceptual paper.

The study considered health sector, specifically, Shifa Hospital Islamabad for the proposed associations; despite extensive training programs offered at Shifa International Hospital for the nursing staff, the performance of nursing staff is not that satisfactory. Considering this fact, the present study believes that training programs contribute to the scarcity and individuality of human capital in healthcare organizations through sharpening of existing skills and opportunities for learning new skills (Arshad et al., 2016; Ismail & Naseer, 2016; Barney, 1991; Wright et al., 1994; Hatch and Dyer, 2004) but training & development projects do not directly improve the employee performance without individual learning orientation (Waheed et al., 2017; Aragon et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out a critical path emanating from training and development to employee performance in order to identify the role mentioned variables.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Background**

Employees perceive training as an organizational practice and this result driven behaviour leads to the norms of reciprocity on which Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) is based. This, perception of employees creates a social exchange relationship in which employees reciprocate with desirable job attitudinal outcomes that in this study are learning, commitment and performance.

### **Training and Development Programs and Employee Performance**

Training and development programs are systematic process by which the confidence level of employees, their expertise and knowledge are developed and polished for achieving goals. This is established previously that employees' training significantly influences their performance, (Ng, 2005). For improving employee performance, Muzaffar et al. (2012) suggested executing on-the-job training programs. Therefore, learning-oriented training programs implemented on an on-going basis are important. For improving the work quality or performance of employees, a large number of specific trainings are needed (Waheed et al., 2017; Ferraz and Gallardo-Vaqueq 2016). In the context of Pakistan, Mahmood (2012) found a significant positive relation amongst training and employee performance. It is also claimed by Jabeen (2011), Grana and Bababe (2011) that the only way of improving employee performance are training and development initiatives at organizational level. Thus, we suggest that improvement in skills, knowledge, capabilities and expertise essentially replies to environmental unpredictability.

According to Agyei (2014), training & development programs do not only improve or develop the capacities of workforce but also enhance their cognitive power and novelty to make better decisions and become more beneficial for the organization. Further, it also enables employees to handle complaints in a timely manner and deal customers more effectively (Hollenbeck, Derue and Guzzo 2004). Training also helps in replacing traditional and weak practices with new and innovative ones, (Kathiravan, Devadason and Zakkeer, 2006). Another untapped benefit of the trainings and development programs is that they help reduce the anxiety and frustration caused by job or work, employees who can't perform their jobs up to the desired level often gets frustrated and decide to quit the job, Chen et al. (2003), but

even if they stay with the organization they can't contribute to the organizational productivity without the required level of skills and knowledge, (Kanelopoulos and Akrivos, 2006). As the difference between necessary and actual skills possessed by employees increase, the dissatisfaction of employees also increase. Here training and development programs can play a vital role to bridge this gap through regular up gradation of skills and capabilities of the employees, (Rowden, 2002).

In Pakistan, private hospitals in healthcare sector face intense competition based on cost of treatment, technical competence of staff, waiting time, cleanliness, patient satisfaction and patient services delivered by the staff (Arshad et al., 2016). The patient experience revolves around all the aforementioned parameters. They agree to pay more for better quality services but if the staff fails to deliver quality, the patient might switch to the competitor organization for offering better quality services. Training & development (T&D) programs are introduced to keep the staff updated, upgraded and refreshed on technical and non-technical healthcare practices.

*H1: There is a positive relationship between Training and Development (T&D) programs and Employee Performance (EP)*

### **Training and Development Programs and Individual Learning**

Well Planned and well-designed training and development programs enhance learning of the individuals, groups, and organization (Barba-Aragone, 2014). Researchers consider individual learning as a resultant variable (e.g., Barba-Aragon et al., 2014; Jerez Gomez et al., 2004; Bartel, 1994; McGill and Slocum, 1993) and suggest that learning is an outcome of HR practices, of which training, and development initiatives are the most paramount. It is also demonstrated in several research studies that higher the percentage of trained employees in an organization, higher is the organizational capacity to adapt to market changes, technology advancement and new practices (Hart, 1995; Klassen and McLaughlin, 1993; Zilahy, 2004).

Barba-Aragon et al. (2014) highlighted; there still exist a little research on the relation amongst training & development and individual learning. It is therefore important to analyze the relationship, because despite the research studies have highlighted the importance of training and on-going education for employees (Aragón, Barba, & Sanz, 2003; Chi, Wu, & Lin, 2008; Nikandrou et al 2008), but still it is also seen that less attention is being given to the fact that how trainings are important for individual learning (Waheed et al., 2017). Thus it is hypothesized that;

*H2: There is a positive relationship between Training & Development (T&D) and Individual Learning (IL)*

## **Individual Learning and Employee Performance**

All organizations learn but what does it mean when we say organizational learning? According to a few authors Werlang and Rossetto, (2019), organizational learning is used as a metaphor for individual learning. Learning in an organization takes place at multiple levels i.e: Individual-level, group-level and organizational-level. Individual learning is a prerequisite for all levels of learning because organizations are made up of individuals and an organization only learns when its individual employees are capable and motivated enough to learn. Kim (1993) established that individual learning leads to organizational learning. On the other hand, a few researchers argue this concept and believe that individual learning do not ensure organizational learning. Learning at group and organizational level occurs only when individuals transmit the acquired skills and knowledge to others. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that although existing research studies declare organizational learning as a multi-level concept but do not usually analyse this relation separately at each three levels (Aragon et al 2014).

Individual learning takes place when individuals learn and their learning depends on training programs, this learning improves their knowledge, capabilities and skills thereby improve their performance at work, (Hadi, 2021; Waheed et al., 2017; Raduan et al., 2009; Rani; 2017). Further, Elnaga and Imran (2013) reported that there exists a positive significant relation amongst frequency of learning activities and employee performance at work, showing that high performing employees are those who keep engaged in greater learning activities.

*H3: There is a positive relationship between Individual Learning (IL) and Employee Performance (EP)*

## **Individual Learning as a Mediator**

Employee performance is not a direct result of training & development programs which are initiated with an aim of improving performance but through other variables as well which are playing their part alongside including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational culture, leadership (Amina et al., 2021; Arshad et al., 2021; Hadi et al., 2021; Tahir et al., 2021; Latif et al., 2021; Yousaf and Hadi., Raza et al., 2020; 2020; Latif et al., 2020; Mahmood et al., 2019; Minhaj et al., 2019; Latif et al., 2019; Hadi and Ahmed, 2018). Aragon et al. (2014) elicited that training and development initiatives do not have a direct influence on performance of employees but rather an indirect affect through organizational learning. Further, there exists a general agreement regarding organizational learning among researchers, who believe that organizational learning is a multi-dimensional concept at distinct cognitive levels and include different sub-processes. Generally, two main approaches are used in organizational learning, Tsang. (1997). First one understands Organizational Learning as a method by

which firms learn and produce new tacit and explicit knowledge, Huber. (1991); Slater and Narver (1995); Daniel and Valle (2011); Jyothibabu et al. (2010); Flores et al. (2012). This process is composed of four sub-processes including knowledge acquisition, distribution, interpretation and memory. Second approach understands organizational learning as organizational capacity attributed to organizational orientation to contribute to the process of organizational learning, Garvin (1993); Jerez Gomez et al. (2004); Chiva et al. (2007); Camps and Luna-Aroca (2012). Thus, a learning organization is one that is skilled to create, acquire, transfer knowledge and modify behavior to mirror new understandings and knowledge. Garvin (1993) established that organizational learning capacity comes from managerial and organizational characteristics that allows learning to occur in an organization, Chiva et al. (2007); Tohidi et al. (2012). According to the second approach, the facilitators of organizational learning have direct impact on learning, Chiva et al. (2007)

For this study, we adopt the second approach on OL which considers OL as management and organizational characteristics to facilitate the learning process, which means that “ a method of transformation in individual and mutual thoughts and actions which are embedded and affected by institutions of the organization” Crossan et al. (1999). Organizational learning occurs at three levels, which are individual, group and organizational levels of learning. Individual-level learning is “the method by which people as individuals creates new understandings and knowledge from already available tacit and explicit knowledge and information”, where the individual-learning capacity means the motivation and competencies of the individual to learn, which is usually reflected in individuals’ behaviours in the form of experimentation, presentation of new ideas and sense of ownership. Bontis et al. (2002). Group-learning refers to “individuals transmitting their knowledge inside the groups so that participants of the group develop mutual understanding”. Huber (1991); Crossan et al. (1999); Kiessling et al. (2009), where dialogs and mutual actions determines the effectiveness of group level learning, Senge (1990); Crossan et al. (1999); Bontis et al. (2002). The third level is organizational level learning which refers to “ institutionalization of individual and group learning in an organization”. Crossan et al. (1999) or it embeds the individual-level and group-level learning into systems, structures, processes, cultures and strategies, Bontis et al. (2002). It is thus, the individual learning is introduced as a mediator in the relation amongst training & development programs and employee performance. Empirical testing of this relationship is also called by Waheed et al. (2017) in their conceptual study. It is proposed that training and development enhance individual learning which then improves employee performance. Hence, we hypothesize:

*H4: Individual Learning mediates the relationship between Training and Development (T&D) Programs and Employee Performance (EP)*

### **Affective Commitment as a Moderator**

It is established previously that even though training effectiveness vitally depends on the training design, training content and its implementation but factors outside training context should also be considered carefully Waheed et al. (2017). These factors may include motivation, self-efficacy, job involvement, work environment, organizational commitment, reaction to training and acquisition of knowledge. According to Barba-Aragone (2014), planned and well-designed training and development initiatives facilitate learning at all three levels i.e. individual, group, and organizational levels. Organizations that provide greatest accord between organization and individuals' objectives are ones that are most conscious to their employees and give them opportunities to learn, grow and achieve Rowden and Conine (2005); Yeo (2002) also proposed a positive relation between work commitment and single loop, double loop and deuterio loop learning. But according to ÚbedaGarcía et al. (2013), connection amongst training and development and employee performance is not merely the outcome of skills that they learn from trainings but also by the worth that they possess Castro-Casal, Vila-Vazquez and Pardo-Gayoso (2019) within the organization; which is explained by the level of commitment they have for their employer organization. For example, the effectiveness of training programs are lesser for non-committed employees as compared to committed. The level and type of commitment do matter in the relationship between training and development programs and employee performance and this relationship need to be tested empirically Waheed et al. (2017). Therefore, this study considered the affective commitment dimension of organizational commitment for this study. We argue that employees who are comparatively psychologically attached to organizational will get benefits from training and development program and in return they will highly perform well. Thus, we hypothesize that:

*H5: There is a moderating role of Affective Commitment (AC) on relationship between Training and Development (T&D) programs and Individual Learning (IL)*

Chen and Francesco (2003) analyzed the three categories of organizational commitments i.e. Continuance, Normative and Affective Commitment with employee performance and found a significant positive relationship amongst affective commitment and employee performance. The study also suggested that affective commitment might be associated with the individuals working in the organization but not the organization itself. For this research, we aim to study the affective commitment of individual employees for the organization itself.

Meyer et al. (2002) also found strong association amongst affective commitment and job involvement and performance. Thus we propose a moderating role of affective Commitment.

*H6: There is a moderating role of Affective Commitment (AC) on relationship between Individual Learning (IL) and Employee Performance (EP)*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection and Sample**

Questionnaire survey is used to draw primary data for this study. Five-point Likert scale is used in the questionnaire and it has five sections. First section collects general information of the respondent. Second section has items related to Training and Development Programs, third section has items pertaining to Affective Commitment, fourth section contains items on Individual Learning and fifth section has questions about Employee Performance. Sample size is calculated using WHO sample size calculator and taking the following parameters: Simple Random Sampling

Confidence level = 95%

Expected proportion of population = 0.50

Required Total Precision= 0.06

Relative Precision = 0.12

Population Size = 800 (Nursing Staff of Shifa)

Sample Size = 201

Expected response rate = 70%

Required sample size  $201 + (70/100 * 201) = 260$ .

### **Measures**

#### ***Training and Development Programs***

A training scale of Asfaw et al., (2015) is taken into account with some modification due to the context of the study. This scale measures the characteristics of T&D programs through probability of selection for training, relevance of training, application of training on job and outcomes of training like motivation

and job performance (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1** *Training and Development Programs scale*

Items
There is an equal opportunity to undergo training and development programs for all nurses at Shifa.
Training and development programs at Shifa Hospital are designed according to the requirements of job.
Training and development programs fulfil employees' deficiency to perform their jobs efficiently.
The type of trainings I receive are applicable to my job.
The training improve/increase my motivation to perform my job duties.
Training and development programs increase my job performance

### ***Affective Commitment***

Affective commitment scale is adapted from the study by Rhoades et al., (2001), who measured affective commitment as one of the three types of organizational commitments. The scale of affective commitment measures the extent of emotional or psychological commitment in terms of employees' attachment, sense of belonging, pride and ownership with the organization (6 items, see Table 2 below).

**Table 2** *Affective commitment scale*

Items
I feel a strong sense of belonging to Shifa.
I feel personally attached to Shifa.
I am proud to tell others, I work at Shifa International.
Working at Shifa has a great personal meaning for me.
I would be proud to work at Shifa until I retire.
I really feel that problems faced by Shifa are my problems.

### **Individual Learning**

Organizational learning has three levels: individual, group and organizational. The focus of this study is on individual learning. The scale of individual learning is extracted from Argon et al., 2014. See for detail Table 3.

**Table 3** *Individual learning scale*

Items
I am able to break out of traditional mind-sets to see things in new and different ways.
I feel a sense of pride in their work.
I have a clear sense of direction in their work.
I have generated many new ideas and insights.
I am aware of the issues that affect their work.
I feel confident in their work.
I feel a sense of accomplishment in what they do.

## Employee Performance

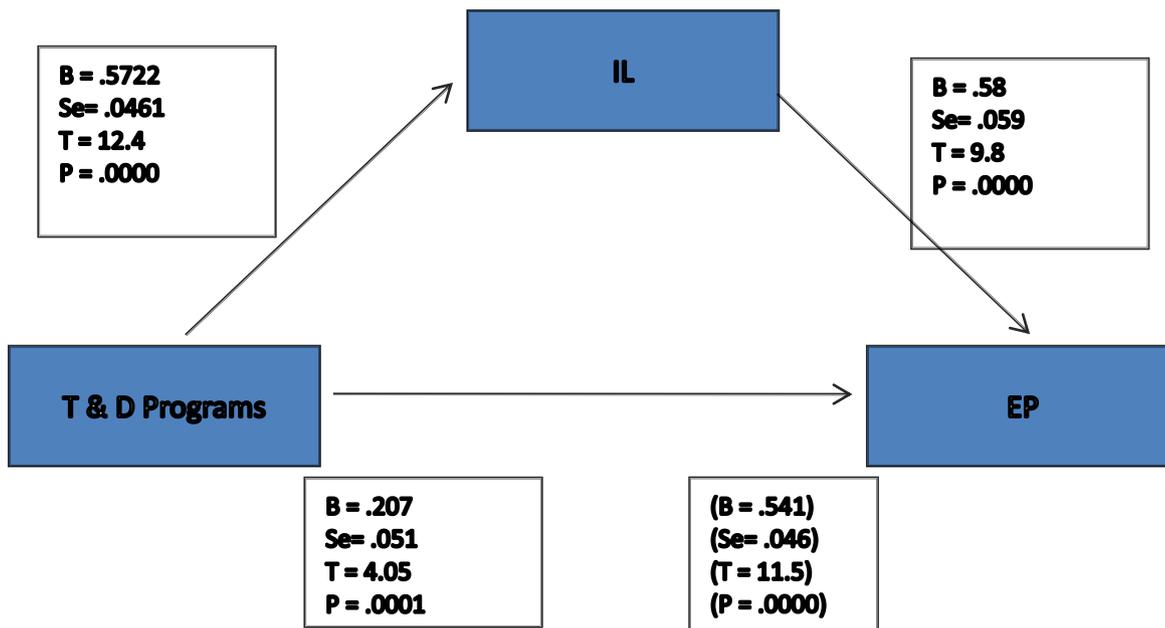
The scale for employee performance is extracted from Alfandi (2016), which measures the employee performance in terms of meeting quality standards, improvement of work quality, meeting work specifications, willingness to work hard, dealing with troubles at work, following instructions and regulations, achieving larger number of tasks, saving time at work and achieving flexibility at work (see for detail Table 4). Since, the study did modification in existing scales, thus EFA was conducted as strongly suggested by Hadi et al. (2016a) and Kaiser, (1974). All scales are anchored by strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-5).

**Table 4** *Employee Performance scale*

Items
I do my job according to required quality standards.
Training programs help me to improve work continuously
Training programs help me to achieve the work within the required specifications
Training programs help me reduce errors
I follow the instructions and regulations at work
Training helps me achieve a larger number of tasks
I have the ability to deal with troubles at work
I finish the required work even if it requires extra efforts
I am willing to work harder
Training programs help me to save time at work
Training programs helps me to achieve greater flexibility at work.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Primary data was collected from 201 nursing professionals, which was analysed using SPSS 21 software. Model 4 of PROCESS macro was used for simple mediation analysis first. The results are provided in Figure, 1 below,



**Figure 1 Mediation Model**

The strength of mediation was also assessed via variance account for (VAF) as strongly suggested by Hadi et al. (2016b)

Total Effect = Direct Effect + Indirect Effect

$$= 0.207 + 0.3306$$

$$= 0.541$$

Model 4 shows that IL mediate the relationship between T&D Programs and EP. Now we need to check the strength of mediation.

$$\text{VAF} = \frac{\text{indirect effect}}{\text{Total Effect}} * 100$$

$$= \frac{.3306}{.541} * 100$$

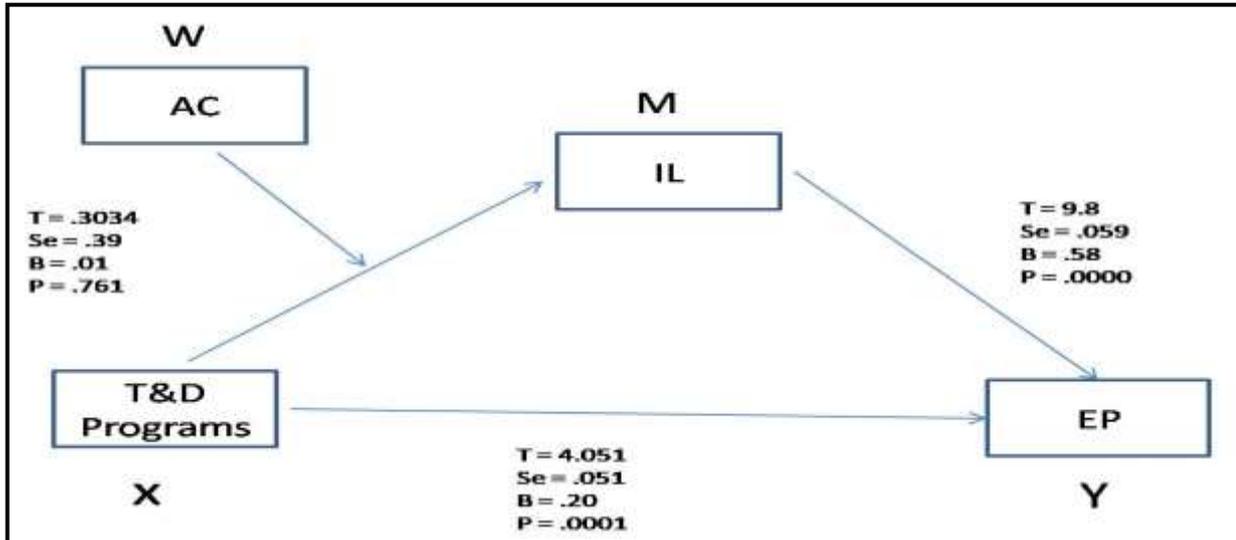
$$= \frac{.3306}{.541} * 100$$

$$= 61\%$$

$$= 61\%$$

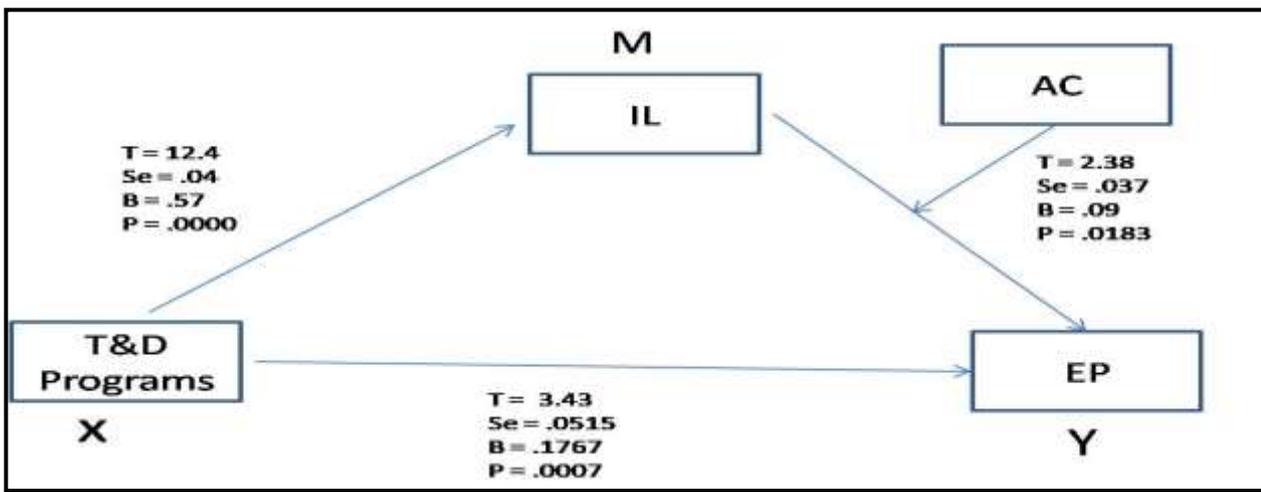
Results show that IL has 61% mediation effect, which means that IL significantly mediates the relationship between T&D programs and EP. SPSS model 7 is used for moderated mediation analysis.

It is applied to examine the hypothesis regarding moderated mediation, where, X is independent variable (predictor) i.e., training and development programs; Y is dependent variable (outcome) i.e., employee performance, M is mediator i.e., individual learning and W is moderator i.e., affective commitment. Regression analysis was used to investigate that affective commitment moderates the effect of training and development programs on individual learning which ultimately effects the employee performance. Results of the research model are interpreted below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 With Moderating Effect**

Figure 2 above shows that the moderator i.e., AC has a P value of .761, showing insignificant moderation as the value is greater than .05 and T value is .3034 which is greater than 0.1. In other words, it can be concluded that there is an insufficient evidence of the existence of moderating effect of AC on the relationship between T&D Program and IL in the study sample. Therefore, the hypothesis regarding the moderation of AC on the relationship between T&D Programs and IL is not supported by the results. Further, in order to investigate the moderating impact of AC between IL and EP, SPSS Model 14 is applied to calculate the moderated mediation effect. The results are interpreted below in Figure 3



**Figure 3 Generated Model**

Figure above show that AC has P value = .0183, which signify that moderating effect of AC between IL and EP. The analysis of study data represents that Affective Commitment moderates the relationship between IL and EP.

### DISCUSSION

Training and development programs are targeted at improving the performance of employees. Study results suggested a positive relationship between Training & Development (T&D) Programs and Employee Performance (EP). Previously, Kurrupu et al. (2021), Mahadevan and Yap (2019) and Mahmood (2012) found a significant and positive relationship between training and employee performance in the context of Pakistan, in her PhD research study. She established that connecting training and development to employee performance is a supportive and efficient organizational strategy to achieve organization’s and employees’ success. Grana and Bababe (2011) and Jabeen (2011) also claim that employee performance can only be improved through training programs.

The results also established a mediating role of individual learning between training and development programs and employee performance in context of Shifa hospital. According to Waheed et al. (2017) and Barba and Aragon (2014), well Planned and well-designed training and development programs contribute to learning at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Their study claims that training is a key tool for increasing and improving the organizational capability of the organization. The results support learning theory, as the training and development programs facilitates individual learning which then leads to improved employee performance. Further, it also supports the idea that training and development programs are effective only if the individuals have an intrinsic motivation to learn and designed according to individual job requirement.

However, findings of the study do not support the moderating impact of affective commitment between training and development programs and individual learning. According to the results, it can be concluded that individual learning is not affected by the level of commitment. Employees are eager to undergo training programs, either technical or non-technical, because they are provided free of cost. Training and development programs (T&D) lead to individual learning without the moderating impact of affective commitment (AC). Here, it is also possible that nursing staff learn from training programs and polish their professional and technical skills for career progression and future jobs.

Moreover, the study results show that affective commitment moderates the relationship between individual learning (IL) and employee performance (EP). The findings signify that employee performance is impacted by their level of affective commitment. Employees learn individually but perform well when they are affectively committed to their employer organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the research study, five of the initially proposed hypotheses are supported and one is not supported. Study findings confirmed the mediating role of individual learning between training and development programs (T&D) and employee performance (EP). Whereas, the moderating role of affective commitment (AC) on relationship between training and development programs (T&D) and individual learning (IL) is not significant. Therefore, the study denies the moderation of affective commitment on training and development programs (T&D) and individual learning (IL). The findings of research study also proved helpful in proposing a critical path from training & development programs (T&D) and employee performance (EP), which is mentioned in generated model Figure 3.

### **Implications**

The study offers the following implications for training department, hospital administrations, and policy makers. In relation to training department. The training department should plan and design training and development programs according to the job requirements of individual employees. Further, the training programs will be effective only if they are aimed at improving the specific skills, knowledge and attitudes of individual employees. Similarly, the strongly suggesting to training department that employees perform when they are affectively committed to the organization. Therefore, the management should take appropriate measures to identify employees who are worth investing on i.e., differentiate between committed and non-committed employees.

Further, for some employees non monetary rewards like appreciation from their managers, opportunity to work on important tasks or projects and even attention from leadership can be prove to be a worthy reward and an intrinsic motivation to perform better. On the other hand, Ahmad et al. (2010) stated that employees feel rewarded and motivated, when they believe that they are being fairly paid for the work they do. Therefore, human resource department with the support of higher management should introduce monetary and non-monetary rewards to encourage high performance of employees in the organization. Hospital administration need to form Adhoc committees in different departments to evaluate the performance of employees who complete training and development programs. The committee may comprise of departmental head, managers and supervisors who closely monitor the performance of their employees and compare pre and post training performance. In line with this, psychometric assessment can be introduced in the organization to assess the training needs of individual employees. Since Barwell et al., (1996) highlighted the importance of using psychometric tool for training needs analysis. This tool can help in designing customized training programs addressing individuals' training requirements. The finding strongly suggest that top executive of the hospitals should focus on fostering an environment and culture of organizational learning and it is a proven fact that organizational learning is initiated at individual level. Human resource department may link performance appraisals with training and development programs. This initiative will restrict each employee to undergo certain training program to get a high rating in performance appraisals. Similarly, the promotion of employees will also be subjected to successful completion of mandatory training and development programs.

The quality patient care is an essential for healthcare organizations, which entirely depends on the performance of healthcare professionals. Therefore, the management should adopt a completely unbiased performance management system. The performance of employees should be evaluated on a fair scale and areas of improvement should also be highlighted to improve performance. Further, the quality assurance team should regularly monitor the performance of employees at departmental level and propose improvements.

Training and development programs can be effective in polishing the skills and knowledge of employees, if designed according to the requirement of jobs. For this T&D department should have a complete competency profile of each level of occupation e.g: Staff Nurse I, Staff Nurse II and so on. Further, it is also suggested that recruitment department should liaison with training and development department for hiring people with right skills, knowledge and attitudes for the jobs they are hired for.

This relationship may be further explored through examining the moderating role of affective

in the healthcare sector of Pakistan and the impact of variables like organizational culture, leadership and HR practices can be observed in future.

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