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<th>Transformational changes and sustainability : from the perspective of identity, trust, commitment, and withdrawal</th>
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Title: Transformational changes and sustainability: From the perspectives of identity, trust and exit-based withdrawal.

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Abstract:

Sustainability helps managers to cope with challenges and create a sense of belongingness for the employees, facilitating organizational development and success. Inspired by the prior studies of sustainability, the existing research discussed the role of sustainability via examining employees’ commitment to change, trust in organization, justice judgment and withdrawal behavior. Data were gathered from 401 employees whose organizations experienced changes recently. Findings revealed that justice judgement predicted more commitment and less withdrawal behavior, so did change favorableness. Employees’ organizational identification mediated the aforementioned prediction, whereas trust in organization was also found to moderate the influence of organizational identification. These findings are meaningful in two ways. First, employees’ trust in organization plays a key role in ensuring sustainability of changing organizations. Second, managers shall pay attention to the emergency of sustainability cognate factors (such as withdrawal behavior, commitment to change), so they could develop coping strategies in time and deal with such factors in an effective manner.

Keywords: affective commitment to change; exit-based withdrawal; overall justice judgements; trust in organization; organizational identification; change favorableness; transformational changes;
1. Introduction

In the past decade, globalization has exerted considerable influence over financial markets and their international growth. This has created pressure, volatility, and competition across markets [2]. In parallel, the ensuing dynamics of decentralization, digitization, and diversity of financial markets as well as the intensification of competitive forces has characterized international banking and trade [3]. Amidst financial crisis including the 2008 downturn as well as more recent Brexit plans involving the UK and EU; banks and other financial institutions have become insecure and begun re-evaluating their strategy for their corporate sustainability in order to become sustainable organization. In doing so, organizations have to play a positive role in their contribution towards the important factors of the society i.e. economy, environment, and the social actors (people). Over the past two decades, scholars have paid considerable focus on the significance of sustainable change interventions. Many are considering the prospect of forging alliances with industry partners internationally through adaptive change.

Crucially, over this period we have seen a surge in major organizational changes such as mergers and acquisitions, change in leadership, change in HR policies, cultural changes, the introduction of advanced technologies etc. [4]. At their core, what major/transformational organizational changes represent are sets of organization-wide changes to improve capability and competitiveness of organizations pursuing market influence, share and power [5] vis-a-vis pose a threat for employees’ commitment and stickability with the evolving organization. Thus, including people’s commitment for sustainable changes in the facets of sustainable organization that are ecology, equity and economy (De Fabio, 2017). In this context, it has been well documented that most transformational-major change plans tend to fail or not sustainable for a longer span. A common phenomenon is that often major changes are not satisfactorily understood by key actors in the market and thus, they are poorly valued and fail to garner enough support both politically and socio-economically [6,7]. Studies conclude that as a type of significant change that influences a diversity of social actors in the marketplace, the dynamics of major changes should be sensitive to employee commitment, such that projects earn support and are completed in a timely manner. It follows that without committed employees major organizational changes tend to fail [8]. Specifically, scholars have pointed out affective commitment to change as a key driver in achieving sustainability through major changes. Affective commitment to change is defined as a process of binding the employees’ mindset with a particular course of action deemed central for the implementation and success of change projects [9] (p. 475).

Change management scholars have discussed a host of important predictors related to commitment [10]. Amongst these, in the context of transformational changes, a significant role is played by justice judgements [11,12,13], organizational identification [14,15] and trust in organization [16]. From a macro perspective, these predictors emerge when organizations attempt to cope with intensifying and threatening market conditions. Coping is mobilized by internal structural changes including downsizing, job re-design, moderations in HR policy, the adoption of new technologies and the crucial use of M&As [17]. We acknowledge that such internal rearrangements are known as transformational changes with the potential to impact affective commitment to change. The current study builds on the group engagement model (GEM) [11] which posits a framework whereby overall justice judgements and change favorableness are antecedents to affective
commitment to change, a relationship mediated by organizational identification in a study by Soenen et al. [7].

The present study is important in several ways. In terms of theoretical contribution, it provides a new perspective by adding the constructs of trust in organizations and exit-based withdrawal to the debate offered by the integrative framework of Soenen et al. [7]. Further, capitalizing upon psychology of sustainability the repercussions of major organizational changes are studied at micro level that is ‘employees’ (Di Fabio ,2017). This establishes new knowledge in the field of major organizational changes. In terms of managerial practice, it offers empirical data from a developing country context, where retention of trained people is a growing issue for private sector organizations in lieu of assumed monetary benefits at substitute places. This kind of data has not been examined before with regard to affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal in a major organizational change context. Hence, this study offers useful insights for practitioners and change agents to achieve sustainable change in order to become a sustainable organization.

1.1. Organizational Identification and Affective Commitment to Change

Employees who commit to change endorse a particular logic and worldview. The greater the employee’s endorsement the higher the likelihood that concerned actions are internalized and implemented [18]. In this process, affect can positively or negatively strengthen commitment to change, which has implications for how well employees work together.

Affect associated with commitment enables identification with the organization and in certain scenarios correlates positively with performance. In the milieu of major organizational changes, little remains known about the driving psychological forces underpinning the employees’ affective commitment [19,7]. Following the group engagement model (GEM), we theorize that affective commitment to change depends on a sense of justice being delivered and change favorableness – mediated by the notion of organizational identification and moderated by trust in the organization. Our review of the field supports the hypothesis that organizational identification is positively related to affective commitment to change. The notion of organizational identification has been studied for decades [20,21]. The concept of organizational identification is defined by Conroy et al. [22] (p.184) as “an individual’s perception of oneness with his or her organization”. Studies associate positive outcomes with organizational identification such as reduced turnover intention [23] and greater job satisfaction [24].

Studies also associate negative outcomes with organizational identification such as the tendency to over-work [25] as well as to partake in unethical behavior [26], and resistance to change [27]. Though, studies have linked organizational identification with affective commitment to change [1]; little attention is given to the causality between these two variables [28,29]. The rationale we explore is that greater organizational identification will lead to greater affective commitment to change. Both psychological processes attach the individual to the organization [30], and thus, a context that changes the organization is likely to influence these variables in term of their relationship. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Organizational identification is positively related to affective commitment to change.

1.2. Organizational Identification and Exit-Based Withdrawal
Our study adds the outcome of exit-based withdrawal in the relationship with organizational identification alongside affective commitment to change (Figure 1) during organizational change. Research has identified links between the two constructs. Specifically, Van Knippenberg et al. [24] found a negative relationship between organizational identification and withdrawal from the job. A few decades earlier, the notion of exit-based withdrawal was suggested by Hirschmann [31] and Farrell [32]. Exit is one of four theoretical categories underpinning diverse organizational behaviors including turnover intention, requesting a transfer and absenteeism amongst others [32,33]. Thus, a living threat to the sustainability of major organizational changes. It is defined as “equivalent to voluntary separation or turnover from the job” [32] (p. 597).

**Figure 1**: Theoretical framework

![Theoretical framework diagram]

It is argued that greater identification with one’s workplace will lead to an attachment that would reduce the chances of exit-based withdrawal. This enables the retention of potentially valuable human capital for the purpose of competitive advantage [33]. The notion of exit has also been applied at macro scales to organizations and their withdrawal from for instance a supplier [35]. In the developing country context, Fennell & Malik [34] examined exit and voice options for poor households as customers in the education sector and little option to withdraw from a deteriorating public good. This suggests that in such markets the behavior of organizational actors; remains susceptible to barriers e.g. inability to withdraw from a position. This also suggests that in studying organizational identification behavior; poverty might be a barrier for its inverse relationship with exit-based withdrawal. Specifically, an organizational actor who poorly identifies with the organization may not be able to exit due to economic hardships and social stigma. Nasir & Bashir [36] recognize the financial pressures that Pakistani workers face. We contend that the inverse relationship between organizational identification and exit-based withdrawal may not be straightforward in the case of Pakistan and its context of poverty. We conclude the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2**: Organizational identification is negatively related to exit-based withdrawal.

1.3. The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification
Our review and theoretical model places organizational identification at the center of the organizational actor's behavior in experiencing major organizational changes. Studies have tested a variety of organizational behaviors in terms of the mediating power of organizational identification. De Cremer [37] show that procedural justice and counterproductive feelings of disappointment are mediated by identification with the organization. Umphress et al. [26] found the mediating influence of organizational identification between transformational leadership and unethical pro-organization behavior.

Our review below found that overall justice judgment and change favorableness relate with affective commitment to change through the mediating influence of organizational identification. Soenen et al. [7] note that whilst literature associated with GEM offers different types of justice constructs including – distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal – comparatively less is known about organizational justice judgments. This latter construct is defined as the individuals’ overall perceptions about the fairness of an entity (such as that of their organization). This includes personal experiences and knowledge of how others have been treated [38, 39, 40, 7]. We asked whether participants in these organizational justice judgements studies were from developing countries. Asking this acted as motivation for our study into the dynamics and applicability of these notions in a developing-country’s context i.e. Pakistan.

Major organizational changes often induce concerns about justice with consequences for the individual’s affective commitment to the change as well as identification with an organization. The individual who feels unjustly or justly treated tends to generate affective responses towards change projects and initiatives [41, 11] [42] (p.328). In this regard, justice matters in so far as it predicts affective commitment behavior [43]. Such behavior is important because it may advance change or take forms of resistance to change projects, making the sustainability of change difficult for a longer period of time. This includes a loss of identity and disengagement with the merger and acquisition process [44]. Concurrently, a sense of justice or fair treatment is also associated with the organizational identity. Individuals who perceive fair or unfair overall treatment accordingly respond by adjusting their identification with the organization as cognitive dissonance tends to set in [45]. Attitudes of justice also tend to be affective in their drive. Consequently, the onset of identification behavior following on from justice judgements is likely affective in its consequences.

That is, organizational justice judgements may lead to affective commitment to change and this process may involve organizational identification. Thus, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Overall justice judgment predicts affective commitment to change mediated by organizational identification.

Soenen et al. [7] have examined so far, the poorly researched concept of organizational justice judgment in association with organizational identification. Adding to this, we found that during major organizational change events such as merger and acquisitions, whilst anxious about identity concerns, employees can choose to exit their organization. Research implies the role of justice at work which is associated with the choices to stay at the organization or exit it. Dissatisfactory feelings regarding fair treatment associated with a sense of hardship can induce an employee’s intention to leave [32]. The model by Hirschman [31] suggests that employees who have no voice in major organizational change event projects exit the organization. Concurrently, evaluations of unjust treatment that involves dis-identification with the organization may thus culminate into exit-based withdrawal behavior along with affective responses about change projects,
processes and discursive practices [46]. Given Pakistan’s developing country context, and economic hardships and limitations, variables of organizational justice judgements, change favorableness and organizational identification may not necessarily culminate into exit-based withdrawal. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3b**: Organizational justice judgements predict exit-based withdrawal mediated by organizational identification.

Our fourth hypothesis introduces change favorableness (CFAV). Specifically, based on our review we propose two hypotheses that examine the impact of change favorableness on both affective commitments to change and exit-based withdrawal mediated by organizational identification in a change context. Thus, in addition to organizational justice judgments our study included change favorableness as an antecedent variable. The change favorableness construct is identified through the group engagement model, as a positive perception of organizational change [11]. This is predicated on the extent to which the employee feels that there is a gain or economic benefit from change projects [7]. Similarly, the concept of change favorableness is identified as: “the degree to which individuals see themselves as better off as a result of change” [47] (p.5). It is pointed out that valence, the positivity or negativity associated with change dictates the extent to which the individual takes favor with change projects. We adopt the notion of change favorableness as an attitude, manifest in behavior, which to an extent favors change.

In so far, as change favorableness involves an attitude to respond to change the employee is moved in affective ways to commit or deny encountered projects [48] (p.335). In developing an attitude towards a change project, the individual emotionally identifies with aspects of the project that warrant commitment to act. This signals an emotional contagion that binds employees to either favor or rejects change in so far as one identifies and thus commits to the environmental demands [49]. Thus, change favorableness seems to influence affective commitment to change with a role for identification with the organization. Studies that research merger and acquisition activity place organizational identification as a significant variable in driving attitudes about change as well as correlating reactions such as the decision to support a change project [24]. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 4a**: Change favorableness predicts affective commitment to change through the mediating role of organizational identification.

Upon further research, we also considered that change favorableness as an attitude to change correlates with the individual’s decision to exit the organization. The exit-based withdrawal concept suggests that during a change, individuals can develop a power struggle with senior management, and at these crucial junctures, they can be driven to exit the organization [33,34]. However, it also seems that this process may be mediated by the degree to which the individual identifies with the organization and thus has a sense of loyalty, which may influence the decision to stay or leave [33]. The argument is that change favorableness thus predicts exit from the organization relative to the degree to which the individual identifies with the organization. Studies have suggested that dis-identification with one’s organization and its evolving dynamic during change activity, can alienate employees, who feel a sense of silence and disappointment; only to subsequently leave the organization [31]. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 4b: Change favorableness predicts exit-based withdrawal through the mediating role of organizational identification.

Thus far, our review has demonstrated a case for a range of hypothesis, that configures into a model (see Figure 1).

1.4. The Moderating effect of Trust

The last hypothesis we propose draws on debates that discusses the construct of trust. The notion of trust is crucial in the context of different types of organized change. We locate trust as a moderator between independent variables organizational justice judgments and change favorableness, and the mediating organizational identification variable that provides a bridge to the outcome variables affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal. Historically, the concept of trust remains contentious in the literature. That is, trust is a widely researched construct that remains contentious [50,51]. Thus, an explicit definition is important. Kong, Dirks & Ferrin [52] draw on Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer [53] (p.395) to define trust as “the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another”.

Whilst overall, links between justice and trust are scarcely researched [54], some studies have recently investigated this. Kaltiainen, Lipponen, & Holtz [55] examined employee perceptions of justice and cognitive trust in top management during organizational change. They found that perceptions of justice positively correlate with employee feelings of trust in others. This influence was bi-directional and reciprocal. Studies also suggest that trust is crucial because it is a relational mechanism, which organizational change projects tend to disturb [56]. As change initiatives dismantle legacy systems and routines, employees who identify with such systems can experience varying levels of trust in senior management. In this context, a sense of injustice can settle in and affect feelings of commitment.

During organizational change, an employee’s sense of justice can depend on trust in authority figures as well as the degree to which they identify with the organization [56,57,58,59]. Positively correlating outcomes may include affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal; however, whether this is the case in the developing country context of Pakistan remains unknown. We have limited knowledge in this regard. For instance, Iqbal & Ahmad [60] advanced the argument that organizational justice – a tripartite construct of distributive, interactional and procedural justice – correlates significantly with organizational commitment, through the mediating role of trust. This takes a looser viewpoint compared to our study that specifically looks at overall justice judgment studied by Soenen et al. [7]. That is, Iqbal et al. [60] suggest a generic-level confirmation about the presence and influence of trust in relation to commitment. More broadly, in the larger spectrum of eastern countries, a study that involved hotel staff from turkey reported the significant and positive influence of justice and trust on affective commitment [61]. Another study that involved employees from Hong Kong reported that justice – procedural and distributive – contributed to the employee’s commitment [62]. Yet, the construct of organizational justice judgments remains scarcely understood.

Our second independent variable change favorableness has been demonstrated as positive and desirable behavior that leads to greater identification with the organizations undergoing change [11]. H5 hypothesizes influence of change favorableness on affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal, and along this pathway, the role of trust also attenuates the influence of change favorableness on organizational identification. In this regard, Morin et al. [63] argue that the
impact of factors including favorableness, trust in management and justice in a change context, remains less researched. Along these lines, Stinglhamber et al. [29] found that favorable work experiences increase employee affective commitment to organizations mediated by organizational identification. Our model adds exit-based withdrawal to this pathway. We hold that exit-based withdrawal from one’s organization during change may be correlated with the strength of identification with one’s organization. However, given the developing country context of Pakistan and economic hardships faced by employees, exit-based withdrawal may be contingent on more than just non-pecuniary considerations such as organizational identification. The employee may value trust as a safety net for securing employment prospects. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis to account for the moderating influence of trust:

**Hypothesis 5**: The relationships of overall justice judgements and change favorableness with affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal via organizational identification is moderated by trust in organization. The higher the trust, the higher will be affective commitment to change and lower exit-based withdrawal behavior of employees.

Overall, the current study takes a relatively fine-grained approach by testing a meticulous model that hitherto has not been tested in a developing country context (i.e. specifically that of Pakistan). We build on the ideas of group engagement model, Soenen et al. [7], and psychology of sustainability (De Fabio, 2017) as well as the arguments reviewed above, and test a new model that provides a novel perspective on employee behavior for a sustainable organizational change.

2. Methods

2.1 Measures

To collect data, we designed our survey questionnaire based on existing scales (relevant to the constructs in our study) published previously. All variables were measured using five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from ‘strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; neutral = 3; agree = 4; strongly agree = 5).

Overall justice judgments: It was measured by six-item measure (two items were reverse coded) adopted from the study of Ambrose & Schminke [38], with an $\alpha$ value of 0.93. Organizational justice is usually measured in terms of procedural, interactional and distributional justice. Keeping in consideration that employees would be expecting justice in all facets in a post-change scenario we have adapted an overall justice judgements inventory and asked the respondents to reply on these items of overall justice. A sample item was: “Overall, I’m treated fairly by my organization”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was $\alpha = 0.78$.

Change favorableness: A three-item scale was adopted from the study of Fedor et al. [47], with an $\alpha$ value of 0.72. The outcomes of change are critical for both individual and collective capacity that lead to the success of the change process. Change favorableness is an estimate of benefit that employees perceive to be achieved. Here, we have used change favorableness as perceived collective outcome of change because organizational identification gives the gesture of ‘We’ instead of ‘I’ or ‘They’. A sample item was: “People in this organization find their work more interesting (post-change)”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this study came out to be 0.77.
Organizational identification: A six-item scale adapted from the study of Jones & Volpe [64] (α = 0.79), to access the extent of employees’ social identification in terms of perceived prestige associated with organization’s name after the organizational change. A sample item was: “This organization’s successes are my successes”. In this study, Cronbach’s for this measure was α = 0.86.

Trust in organization: A two-item scale was adapted from the study of Thau, Aquino & Wittek [65] (α = 0.82). A sample item was: ‘I believe my employer has higher integrity’. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was α = 0.71.

Affective commitment to change: This measure was adopted from the work of Herscovitch & Meyer [9] (α = 0.88) six-item scale (out of six, three items were reverse coded) developed by Meyer [66]. It was used to measure the extent of support to organizational changes by the respondents in a post-change period. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was α = 0.76. A sample item was: “I believe in the value of this change”.

Exit-based withdrawal: Employees’ exit-based withdrawal behavior was measured with two-item scale adapted from the study of Boswell & Olson-Buchanan [67] (α = 0.84) to assess the quitting intentions of respondents from the current organization that has undergone transformational changes. Kopelman et al. [68] identified that job search behavior is likely to turn intentions into action. A sample item was: “I am seriously considering quitting this job for an alternative employer”. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was α = 0.88.

Later, the questionnaire was designed after approval from departmental ethical committee of above-mentioned measures (Items for each measure can be found in Appendix A). The committee sanctioned following demographic details to be asked from respondents: age, gender, type of change experienced, years of experience with the current organization, qualification, job type, salary and marital status. For the sake of respondents’ confidentiality, the identity of respondents was kept anonymous as per the instructions of ethical committee.

2.2. Sample and Procedure

The following criteria was used to select respondents for the present study. Firstly, to avoid any influence of country differences the present study focuses on a single country context i.e. Pakistan, where the industry is flourishing and evolving rigorously due to foreign investment and decentralization in the services sector. Majority of the past studies were conducted in the developed world [13,70,7], whereas the developing country context offers more insight and understanding towards organizational changes in the cross-cultural setting. Secondly, we focused on larger organizations (having more than 500 employees) with a view to avoid any potential firm size dynamics with respect to major organizational changes such as merger and acquisitions, downsizing, major restructuring, changes in culture, HR policies as well as in leadership [69,33]. Thirdly, organizations from the banking sector who underwent major organizational changes over the past two years were selected. It was made sure to recruit those employees for survey, who have experienced major organizational changes within the same organization in the past. This elucidated the purpose of our research that is how building of overall justice judgments, employees’ perceptions about change favorableness, trust in organization, and organizational identification over the passage of time influenced their affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal behavior from the changed organization.
Researchers contacted HR offices of the organizations selected on the above criteria and after getting permission distributed the survey questionnaire to officer-level employees (who have confronted one or more types of major organizational changes in the past two years) from private commercial banks in Pakistan. The questionnaire was designed in English, keeping in view that participants are white-collar employees with at least 16 years of education and the English language is the medium of instruction after high school in the country. Respondents were given a time of one week to fill the survey questionnaire. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed with return postal envelopes. 401 completed questionnaires were received. Male respondents were = 68.6% whereas female respondents were = 31.2%, and others = 0.2%. Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 20-29 years = 48.1%, whereas 30-39 years were = 38.4%, 40-49 years were 10%; 50-59 years were = 3.2%; and above 60 were approximately 0.2%. In terms of education approximately half of the respondents i.e. 56.9% had master’s degree, MPhil/MS were 21.4%, bachelors (4 years) were 19.5%, and rest were with other professional banking & finance certifications equivalent to sixteen years of education. The demographical details established the notion that most of the employees have the sophisticated educational background according to Pakistani context and are in the growing stage of their carrier. It is the decision-making stage for the well-informed and well-educated employees, where they are believed to have a sound understanding with organization and a clear job vision themselves. So, they would have an unbiased, rational response about the said measures of our theoretical framework.

3. Results

3.1. Initial Analyses

Common method variance (CMV) bias is an issue for self-completion survey questionnaire [71]. To address any potential CMV issue in the present study, we first adopted Harman’s test to examine the potential influence of common method variance bias, in which all variables were merged into one factor. Results showed poor fit, i.e. one single factor of merging all variables was inappropriate for data analysis ($\chi^2$ (275) = 1933.51, p < .001, RMSEA = .12, CFI = .60, GFI = .68, NFI = .57). We adopted Pavlou, Liang, & Xue’s [72] formula to examine the correlation coefficients of research variables, and results suggested that CMV influence was relatively low (Spearman $r_s$ = -.14 -.59) all lower than the threshold = > .90). We also adopted an unmeasured latent construct method (ULCM) to examine the potential influence of CMV, and it indicated no change in any of the correlative path coefficients or significance levels, and the chi-square difference test was significant ($\Delta \chi^2$ (12) = 407.86, p < .001). In sum, the influence of common method variance bias was carefully examined via three tests and the results affirmed a very slim probability of common method variance influence [73,74].

3.2. Analytical Procedure

Series of confirmatory factor analysis models were run to find the distinctiveness among variables by utilizing AMOS v.23. First, we tested the theorized, six-factor model which was then compared with other alternative models to identify the threats that could be present in the original model due to common method variance [75]. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested through simple linear regression. We tested mediation and moderation hypotheses through PROCESS Macro as recommended by Preacher, Rucker & Hays [76]. These tests gave the complete estimates of the
predictors on outcomes variables along with mediation and moderation estimates. The mediation
direct effects estimated, displayed the mediating effect of organizational identification between
predictor and the outcome variables (hypotheses 3 a, b and 4 a, b). The moderating effect for
hypothesis 5 was estimated, with a bootstrapped size of 10,000. The indirect moderating effect size
of trust in organization through organization identification on the outcome variables, affective
commitment to change, and exit-based withdrawal was also measured with accelerated 10,000
bootstrap size and 95% confidence interval [26]. To avoid multicollinearity, predictors were
mean-centered [77]. Age, gender, and qualification were used as control variables in these tests.

3.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis, which confirmed the
distinctiveness of all the variables and their items in the hypothesized research model. First, the
overall model fitness was checked through the six-factor baseline model and then compared with
other alternatives models. The CFI results predicted that the six-factor model showed the best model
fit as compared to all other alternative models. Traditionally, the limit for root mean square error of
approximation value is set up to 0.06, and CFI close to 0.90 [78]. Our baseline model (six-factor
model) showed these estimates very close to the cut off values as compared to five, three, and one
factor-models (Table 1). For example, the six-factor model predicted the good model fitness as
goodness fit index (GFI) = 0.92; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95; non-normed fit index (NNFI) =
0.90; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.04; as compared to the three-factor
model estimates (RMSEA 0.10; CFI 0.73; NNFI 0.57; GFI 0.68). These values showed the validity of
variables and that does not hold any significant common method variance issues with respect to the
validity of items for each factor. Thus, our baseline model was accepted for further hypotheses
testing.

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis.

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>x²</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>NNFI</th>
<th>Δx²</th>
<th>Δdf</th>
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<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.60</td>
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<td>Three-factor model</td>
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<td>272</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>331.566</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five-factor model</td>
<td>1068.157***</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>639.9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six-factor model</td>
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<td>253</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>Base line model</td>
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Notes: N = 401; (*** p < 0.001). GFI = goodness of fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of
approximation; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index. Six factors model refers to the
proposed six factors in this study. Five factors model (organizational identification and affective commitment
to change were merged), three-factor model (overall justice judgements, change favorableness organizational
identification, trust in organization were merged) and one-factor model (all the variables were merged into one
factor).

3.4. Correlation Coefficients

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviation and correlation coefficient values of all the
variables in the present study. Reliability scores i.e. Cronbach’s alpha (α) all fall within the
acceptable range (0.7 to 0.99). Organizational justice judgment was positively correlated to trust in
organization (r = 0.54, p < 0.01), organizational identification (r = 0.45, p < 0.01), and affective
commitment to change \((r = 0.38, p < 0.01)\), whereas negatively correlated to exit-based withdrawal \((r = -0.29, p < 0.01)\). Change favorableness’ was positively correlated to trust in organization \((r = 0.58, p < 0.01)\), organizational identification \((r = 0.44, p < 0.01)\), affective commitment to change \((r = 0.45, p < 0.01)\), and negatively correlated to exit-based withdrawal \((r = -0.14, p < 0.01)\). Organizational identification was positively correlated to affective commitment to change \((r = 0.43, p < 0.01)\), and organizational identification was negatively correlated to exit-based withdrawal \((r = -0.20, p < 0.01)\).

In conclusion, the results of correlation coefficients were inline as expected.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OJJ</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFAV</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.49*</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.45*</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACtC</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBW</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>-0.20*</td>
<td>-0.26*</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N = 40; \(***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05\). OJJ = overall justice judgements; CFAV = change favorableness; TO = trust in organization; OI = organizational identification; ACtC = affective commitment to change; EBW = exit-based withdrawal. Cronbach’s \(\alpha\) value of each variable are presented in italic fonts.

3.5. Regression Analysis

Table 3 shows the regression results of organizational identification with affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal behavior. Organizational identification was observed to have a significant positive relationship with affective commitment to change \((\beta = 0.432, p < 0.001)\). Thus, confirming hypothesis 1. Organizational identification showed significant negative relationship with exit-based withdrawal behavior \((\beta = -0.200, p < 0.001)\). Thus, hypothesis 2 was also accepted.

Table 3. Summary of regression analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ACtC</th>
<th>EBW</th>
<th>ACtC</th>
<th>EBW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>0.432***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ R²</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F²</td>
<td>1.891</td>
<td>91.369</td>
<td>1.694</td>
<td>16.489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N = 40; \(***p < 0.001\). ACtC = affective comment to change, EBW = exit-based withdrawal, OI = organizational identification. The regression coefficients shown are standardized regression coefficients \(\beta\).
3.6. Mediation analysis

Table 4, and Table 5, present the mediation results of organizational identification between overall justice judgments and change favorableness with affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal behavior. Table 4 shows that organizational justice judgment was significant and positively related to organizational identification (β = 0.4960, p < 0.001), affective commitment to change (β = 0.2309, p < 0.001), and was significantly negatively related to exit-based withdrawal (β = -0.4194, p < 0.001), organizational identification was significantly positively related to affective commitment to change (β = 0.2842, p < 0.001), and organizational identification was negatively related to exit-based withdrawal (β = -0.1288, p = ns). So, we have found that there exists partial mediation of organizational identification between organizational justice judgment and affective commitment to change, confirming hypothesis 3a. Hypothesis 3b was, therefore, not accepted i.e. organizational identification did not mediate between organizational justice judgment and exit-based withdrawal. Table 5 shows that change favorableness was significantly positively related to organizational identification (β = 0.4248, p = 0.001), and with affective commitment to change (β = 0.2608, p < 0.001), whereas change favorableness had a non-significant negative relationship with exit-based withdrawal (β = -0.0846, p = ns). However, organizational identification was significantly positively related to affective commitment to change (β = 0.2526, p < 0.001), and organizational identification is significantly negatively related to exit-based withdrawal (β = -0.2631, p < 0.05). Results showed that organizational identification plays a partial mediation role between change favorableness and affective commitment to change (hypothesis 4a) whereas organizational identification plays a full mediation role between change favorableness and exit-based withdrawal (Hypothesis 4b).

Table 4. Results of bootstrapped mediation analysis examining the relations of overall justice judgment and organizational identification on affective commitment to change, and exit-based withdrawal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>β(SE)</th>
<th>OI</th>
<th>ACtC</th>
<th>EBW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>-0.0658(.0374)</td>
<td>0.0092(.0326)</td>
<td>0.0159(.0614)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.0208(.0416)</td>
<td>0.0636(.0360)</td>
<td>-0.0808(.0680)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.0537(.0706)</td>
<td>0.1226(.0613)*</td>
<td>-0.2015(.1156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJJ</td>
<td>0.4960(.0486)***</td>
<td>0.2309(.0474) ***</td>
<td>-0.4194(.0894) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>0.2842(.0436) ***</td>
<td>-0.1288(.0822)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>27.1603***</td>
<td>25.5498***</td>
<td>8.9888***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td>0.2153</td>
<td>0.2444</td>
<td>0.1022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N = 401; (**p < 0.001; *p < 0.05). OJJ = overall justice judgements, OI = organizational identification, ACtC = affective comment to change, EBW = exit-based withdrawal. Bootstrap sample size 10,000.

Table 5. Results of bootstrapped mediation analysis examining the relations of change favorableness and organizational identification on affective commitment to change, and exit-based withdrawal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>β(SE)</th>
<th>OI</th>
<th>ACtC</th>
<th>EBW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>-0.0778(.0374)**</td>
<td>0.0003(.0319)**</td>
<td>0.0481(.0631)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7. Moderated Mediation Analysis

Table 6 and Table 7 show the moderated mediation effect of organizational trust upon affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal behavior of employees via organizational identification. Moderated mediation analysis was done using 10,000 bootstrapping size through Preacher and Hayes PROCESS Macro. Hypothesis 5 predicted the moderation of trust between organizational justice judgment, change favorableness, and organizational identification. Table 6 shows that the interaction between organizational justice judgment and trust in organization has a non-significant relationship with organizational identification, exit-based withdrawal, and a significant relationship with affective commitment to change ($\beta = 0.0801$, $p < 0.05$) (Figure 2). Table 7 shows that the interaction between change favorableness and trust in organization has a significant direct relationship with exit-based withdrawal ($\beta = 0.1984$, $p < 0.01$) (Figure 3) and no significant relationship with organizational identification and affective commitment to change.

Table 6. Results of bootstrapped moderated mediation analysis examining the relations of overall justice judgment and organizational identification on affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>OI</th>
<th>ACtC</th>
<th>EBW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>-0.0761 (.0346)*</td>
<td>0.0007 (.0320)</td>
<td>0.0551 (.0617)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.0081 (.0384)</td>
<td>0.0668 (.0354)*</td>
<td>-0.0834 (.0681)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.0422 (.0653)</td>
<td>0.1256 (.0602)*</td>
<td>-0.1946 (.1159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJJ</td>
<td>0.0774 (.1654)</td>
<td>-0.1177 (.1524)</td>
<td>-0.6654 (.2936)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>0.1850 (.1626)</td>
<td>-0.1110 (.1500)</td>
<td>-0.3023 (.2890)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJJ×TO</td>
<td>0.0515 (.0457)</td>
<td>0.0801 (.0421)*</td>
<td>0.0773 (.0811)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OI</td>
<td>0.2121 (.0464)***</td>
<td>-0.1177 (.0894)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>33.0531</td>
<td>21.4872</td>
<td>6.5666***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.3348</td>
<td>0.2768</td>
<td>0.1047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $N = 401$; (***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$). OJJ = overall justice judgements; OI = organizational identification; ACtC = affective commitment to change; EBW = exit-based withdrawal. Bootstrap sample size 10,000.
Notes: N = 401; (**p < 0.001; **p < 0.01). CFAV = change favorableness; OI = organizational identification; ACtC = affective commitment to change; EBW = exit-based withdrawal. Bootstrap sample size 10,000.

Figure 2. Two-way interaction plot (overall justice judgements OJJ x trust in organization TO) – affective commitment to change ACtC.

Figure 3. Two-way interaction plot (change favorableness CFAV x trust in organization TO) – exit-based withdrawal behavior EBW.
The indirect effects of organizational justice judgment, and change favorableness on affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal are presented in Table 8, and Table 9. Table 8 showed that organizational justice judgment has an indirect effect on affective commitment to change with moderating role of trust in organization (both low and high levels of TO) via mediating role of organizational identification. It means trust in organization positively enhance the relationship between organizational justice judgment and affective commitment to change via organizational identification with both lower level and upper level values as positive at 95% confidence interval. However, trust in organization does not moderate the relationship of organizational justice judgment and exit-based withdrawal via organizational identification at either of the levels, neither low nor high. Similarly, Table 9 shows the indirect effect of change favorableness on affective commitment to change and exit-based withdrawal through the moderating role of trust in organization and mediating role of organizational identification. The results showed that change favorableness has a significant indirect effect on affective commitment to change through the mediating role of organizational identification at both the levels of (low and high) trust in organization, with positive upper level and lower level at 95% confidence interval. But, trust in organization has a non-significant indirect impact on the relationship of change favorableness and exit-based withdrawal when trust in organization is low, but same relationship was significant when trust in organization was high via mediation of organizational identification. Thus, hypothesis 5 is accepted for moderating role of trust in organization in the relationship of overall justice judgments, and change favorableness upon affective commitment to change, and change favorableness on exit based withdrawal behavior via mediation of organizational identification.

Table 8. Indirect effects of overall justice judgements on affective commitment to change, and exit-based withdrawal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect effect of OJJ</th>
<th>Effect (SE)</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment to Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator: Organizational identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0438(.0217)</td>
<td>0.0081</td>
<td>0.0924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0547(.0181)</td>
<td>0.0234</td>
<td>0.0928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0601(.0191)</td>
<td>0.0261</td>
<td>0.0996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit-Based Withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator: Organizational identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0243(.0248)</td>
<td>-0.0847</td>
<td>0.0127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0303(.0273)</td>
<td>-0.0922</td>
<td>0.0162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0334(.0295)</td>
<td>-0.0992</td>
<td>0.0173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: OJJ = overall justice judgements; LL= Lower limit; UL=upper limit; CI= confidence interval. Bootstrap size 10,000.

Table 9. Indirect effects of change favorableness on affective commitment to change, and exit-based withdrawal.
### Indirect effect of CFAV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Commitment to Change</th>
<th>Effect (SE)</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0309(.0196)</td>
<td>0.0010</td>
<td>0.0773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0407(.0163)</td>
<td>0.0146</td>
<td>0.0779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>0.0455(.0166)</td>
<td>0.0181</td>
<td>0.0826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exit-Based Withdrawal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediator: Organizational identification</th>
<th>Effect (SE)</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0326(.0241)</td>
<td>-0.9103</td>
<td>0.0009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0428(.0240)</td>
<td>-0.0970</td>
<td>-0.0046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 SD of trust in organization</td>
<td>-0.0480(.0258)</td>
<td>-0.1053</td>
<td>-0.0055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: CFAV = change favorableness; LL = Lower limit; UL = upper limit; CI = confidence interval. Bootstrap size 10,000.

### 4. Discussion

The current paper is focused on developing and testing the proposed hypotheses. The hypotheses were based on research conducted by Soenen et al. [7] inspired by the group engagement model and psychology of sustainability. It centers on organizational identification in the context of workplace change conditions and commitment of employees for organizational sustainability. Specifically, in recent years, given the global context of market forces and constraints, companies have undertaken major organizational changes activities to consolidate their goals and secure sustainable position in markets [7]. At the heart of it, merger and acquisition as a form of organizational change is crucial for organizations seeking enhanced capability and sustaining a competitive edge in the marketplace. However, such environments can induce identity problems for individuals involved with and implementing change [15,79]. This may include a sense of identity loss, but conversely, also over-identification behavior [22] both posing harms to change processes.

Overall, our study answers the call to research by Soenen et al. [7] who argue that: “Future research on major organizational changes integration may benefit from using the group engagement model as a theoretical framework” and psychology of sustainability from individuals’ perspective. Additionally, our study is unique in so far as we apply and test our hypothesized model in the developing country context like Pakistan where transformational organizational changes are prone to unsustainability, as such concerns have not been studied, measured, conceptualized before. Studies have established that range of organizational change projects’ affect tends to exert significant influence on the degree to which employees identify with the organization and remain committed to projects [80,81]. In line with previous studies, we found that greater identification correlated with an increased commitment to the organization. This provides some causality between organizational identification and affective commitment to change, which has been lacking in the field [29] (hypothesis 1).Whilst, the association of organizational identification and exit-based withdrawal of employees has been somewhat established [24] (hypothesis 2). We provide evidence in the major organizational changes context of Pakistan and its third-world conditions.

Concerning hypothesis 3 (a, b) the data confirmed the partial mediating role of organizational identification, specifically with regard to organizational justice judgment which remains poorly understood.
established in the transformational change context [7]. Whilst organizational identification partially mediated between organizational justice judgment and affective commitment to change (hypothesis 3a); it did not mediate between organizational justice judgements and exit-based withdrawal (Hypothesis 3b). In the context of major organizational changes, this suggests that identifying with one’s organization during change is not enough in countering the impact of overall justice judgements on exit-based withdrawal behavior, particularly disengagement and withdrawal from the job. Results showed that organizational identification plays a partial mediation role between change favorableness and affective commitment to change (Hypothesis 4a) whereas organizational identification plays a full mediation role between change favorableness and exit-based withdrawal (hypothesis 4b). Thus, hypothesis 4 (a, b) are accepted. Research supports the notion that favoring change works in so far as it involves identifying with the organization’s positively communicated core values that influence exit choices [82, 48].

Finally, the centrality of trust is suggested in hypothesis 5. Trust moderated organizational justice judgment, change favorableness in relation to affective commitment to change via organizational identification. That is, trust is significant in how people identify with the organization based on judgements of fair treatment. Higher trust levels also moderated the negative relationship of change favorableness and exit-based withdrawal via mediating role of organizational identification. Given the latter predilections, employees are likely to favor change as fair and affectively committed with the organization. This happens only if trust exists when identifying with the changing landscape. Managerial practices aimed towards greater trust-based engagement with change and healthy communication has been found to work [83]. Thus, this adds to the positive psychology of sustainability that with change favorableness and overall justice judgments it is trust that accentuates the long term stickability and commitment of employee with the changing organization.

The variable organizational justice judgements under the influence of trust was non-significantly related to organizational identification and exit-based withdrawal; however significantly related with the dependent variable affective commitment to change. With the independent variable change favorableness under influence from trust in organization, there was a significant direct relationship with exit-based withdrawal and no correlation with affective commitment to change. Thus, a sense of justice combined with trust in the firm, to some degree, shapes how employee sees change projects. Our study uniquely introduces the variable trust to a family of models [84, 85, 47, 7] proposed by past studies on major organizational change dynamics.

We found that in the context of transformational changes, organizational identification and trust in organization may produce some unexpected behaviors like positive exit-based withdrawal due to opportunities available in the market for trained employees. Thus, posing a threat to the sustainability of the change in context. As, we have seen from the empirical results that though exit-based withdrawal is slightly lower than the average rate with a mean score value of 2.98 (Table 2), the tendency to stay with the organization is still not very appreciative. That should be lower provided with the existence of organizational justice judgment, change favorableness, trust in organization, and organizational identification. For the organization, it is an alarming situation, as may be required to hire and train new human resource whilst managing to sustain a large-scale change. So, for maintaining sustainability organizations are required to bring forth more favorable outcomes of change for employees in terms of economic gains that can reduce their exit-based
withdrawal tendency further. We anticipate this will present challenges for human resource management, particularly regarding Pakistan’s turbulent and uncertain markets.

With regard to the model tested by Soenen et al. [7] which is based on the group engagement model; our study introduced “trust in organization” and “exit-based withdrawal” as two crucial variables. These latter variables have not been tested in the field, and nor have they been grounded and tested in the developing country context of South East Asia (i.e. Pakistan in particular). Our study opens space for further research to test the application of models and derivatives thereof in the context of major organizational changes’ processes and conditions in such contexts. Where, change favorableness and over all justice judgments are considered as the intrapreneurial resources for the employees, being participants towards the sustainability of changing organization at the micro level. Here, there are implications for practitioners in the Pakistani context to understand the psychology of sustainability from for the sustainable development of organizational changes including people in the three E’s of sustainability ‘economy, equity and ecology’ (Di Fabio, 2017). As, in the countries like Pakistan, which are facing the turbulence in economic stakes, it is the human resource that usually became the main victim of major changes to meet global quality and financial standards. We need to understand that compliance with the world’s best standards through major changes, requires affective and strategic commitment of stakeholders involved. That is impossible without trust and identification, which can enhance the commitment level of employees with the organization. It will add to collective wellbeing of employees, employer and organization in countries like Pakistan.


This study has certain limitations, due to access issues concerning employee data, probability sampling was a big challenge, so we adopted convenience sampling as a suitable option. Alternatively, the current study, if conducted in a longitudinal time-frame would have collected varying outcomes with respect to the changing workplace circumstances such as for instance, biannual appraisals that are highly subjective. Given time constraints, data were collected in a cross-sectional time-frame that collected only current scenarios of employee behavior. Further, the inclusion of multilevel data would have validated this theoretical framework from both employer and employees’ perspective.

Without the sense of belongingness with the organization, employees cannot sustain the turbulence associated with change and inclined towards switching to a more secure place. This is a common problem in developing countries, where vigorous evolution of organizations creates unrest amongst employees. However, provided with favorable change outcomes for the employees can enhance their intrinsic motivation to stay with the same organization. This can be explored further in other sectors with special attention to contextual factors i.e. salary, job security, emotional wellbeing of employees etc. Future research may investigate models based on the group engagement model, sustainable development and psychology of sustainability at multiple levels i.e. micro and macro both. Including predictors with respect to leadership, stakeholders’ self-choices and individual dimensions of justice that can contribute in sustainability of organizations who underwent major organizational changes. Such studies will provide habitat to analyze diverse employee behavioral outcomes in developed or developing country contexts. On this front, in methodological terms, a
multi-level analysis has the potential to provide a holistic picture of major organizational changes and employee propensities. For practitioners and policy makers, we have opened the niche of psychological sustainability from people’s perspective. There is a dire need to care for psychological capital of employees, i.e. justice, equity rights in changing organization etc. Only then employees will own the major change activities and their sustainability can be ensured for public and private organizations both.

5. Conclusions

Identification, trust, affective commitment and exit behaviors are the important facets for the sustainability of an organization, who has recently experienced major changes. These elements have been less studied in the developing countries. The focus in such countries is usually upon the economic benefits of changes that sometimes jeopardize the psychological account of an employee with the organization. Thus, marginalize the psychological sustainability of essential changes. Resultantly, a change that may seem to be favorable right now may not be sustainable over a longer time. Associated with it is the marginal level exit-based withdrawal behavior of an employee observed in our study for better economic benefits at a substitute place. In this scenario, the positive stickability of an employee with the changing organization is necessary for surviving change and getting optimum benefits out of it i.e. affective commitment to change and employee’s stay at job as well. For this, we have found that it is trust in organization that perpetuates the employees’ commitment. Thus, it adds to the psychology of sustainability literature that along with fulfilling the standard practices to make the change favorable and offer just rights to the stakeholders, it is important to win the trust of people first. If they have trust they would stay through the thick and thin times. Further, our study opens the face of reality that despite higher levels of overall justice judgements, change favorableness, trust in organization, organizational identification, affective commitment to change, employees have exit-based withdrawal tendency. It may not portray a sustainable future for a changing organization, if employees’ expectations of future gains from change would not be fulfilled (as observed through the average response tendency of employees to the variables of this study). Employees with lessor exit-based withdrawal intentions would be more likely to take the change in context towards innovative progress adding to organizational sustainability. And, organizations can make it possible through increasing the potential future gains for human resource and flourishing employees’ trust account with the management.

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References


Appendix A

Overall justice judgment

- Overall, I’m treated fairly by my organization.
- Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair.
- In general, I can count on this organization to be fair.
- In general, the treatment I receive around here is fair.
- For the most part, this organization treats its employees fairly.
- Most of the people who work here would say they are often treated unfairly.

Change favorableness

- People in this organization find their work more interesting.
- Most people in this unit are better off.
- People’s quality of life at work has improved.

Trust in organization

- I believe my employer has high integrity
- My employer is open and upfront with me.

Organizational identification

- When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult.
- I am very interested in what others think about my current organization.
- When I talk about my organization I usually say “we” rather than “they.”
- This organization’s successes are my successes.
- When someone praises my organization, it feels like a personal compliment.
- If a story in the media criticized my organization, I would feel embarrassed.
Affective commitment to change

- I believe in the value of this change.
- This change is a good strategy for this organization.
- I think that management has made a mistake by introducing this change.
- This change serves an important purpose.
- Things would be better without this change.
- This change was not necessary.

Exit-based withdrawal

- I am seriously considering quitting this job for an alternative employer.
- During the next year, I will probably look for a new job outside this company.