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**Prof. Dr. Syed Mir Muhammad Shah**

Vice Chancellor, Sukkur IBA University

## Editorial

*Dear Readers,*

Once again, it's a pleasure to bring you the latest issue of **Sukkur IBA Journal of Management and Business - SIJMB**. Following our editorial policy, this issue contains double blind peer-reviewed articles which address the key business, management and economic issues pertaining to both national and international levels. The continued efforts of our editorial team and reviewers have enabled **SIJMB** to present you the high-quality research work based on the innovation, originality and contemporary issues in the core areas but, not limited to business, management and economics. **SIJMB** follows continuous improvement policy, and I thank all the stakeholders who have been the part of it. Moreover, **SIJMB** has continued its open access policy in order to reach larger audience and wider dissemination of published work.

While not forgetting that the **SIJMB** has an institutional association with **Sukkur IBA University**. In fact, the initiation of **SIJMB** is an outcome of strong research orientation followed by the Sukkur IBA and I am grateful for continuous institutional support in this regard. In addition, the **SIJMB** provides valuable platform for national and international researchers and publishes their research findings and disseminates those to the largest audience. The journal does not charge any fees and provides complimentary copy (in hard form) to each author. In addition, the supplement copies of the journal are also distributed to HEI and R&D institutions of the country. The journal has been archived by world's renowned scientific repositories. Journal has received recognition from several research agencies, universities and renowned professors. With pleasure, it is also to share with you all that the **SIJMB** has recognized by the **Higher Education Commission (HEC)**. In coming years, the journal aims to improve its current state by attracting more national and international researchers in the field of business, management and economics.

On behalf of the **SIJMB**, I welcome submissions for the upcoming issues of the journal and looking forward to receiving your valuable feedback.

**Dr. Faheem Gul Gilal**

*Editor-in-Chief*

**SIJMB**

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## Emotional or Functional Positioning? Exploring the Motivation to buy High-end Consumer Brands

Umama Sharif Khattak<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Usamah Iyyaz Billah<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This research study aims to investigate the impact of functional and emotional benefit positioning on purchase intention with the mediating role of brand attitude and moderating role of subjective norms. This quantitative, hypothesis testing study has been conducted on high end clothing brands catering to the female target audience. Data was gathered from a sample of 200 female users of these brands and analysis was done using Process macro by Hayes moderated mediation model 14 in SPSS. Results of the analysis supported five of the proposed hypotheses showing that functional benefit has the strongest relationship with purchase intention, followed by emotional benefits. The moderator subjective norms and mediator brand attitude did not have a significant impact which implies that choice of selecting clothing brands is mainly influenced by the quality, design, functional attributes and qualities. Furthermore, consumers value those emotional benefits which satisfy their social expression needs. Consumers buy their favorite, well known brands mainly on the basis of brand performance as compared to influence by subjective norms, i.e., opinion of family or friends. Our research provides a theoretical contribution by applying the renowned Theory of reasoned action to a new avenue of study. It also widens the range of factors that can help brands in adopting positioning strategies. It enhances knowledge and understanding of the variables and their relationships which can help in devising actionable strategies that can be used by brands.

**Keywords:** Emotional Positioning; Functional Positioning; Subjective norms; Purchase intention; Reasoned action

**JEL Codes:** M00, M1, M31.

### 1. Introduction

Brand positioning strategy is a diverse phenomenon that has grasped the attention of numerous scholars over the years. While a considerable number of research articles are available on the subject (Wang et al., 2022; He et al., 2022; Rua et al., 2022; Gilal et al., 2022; Olsen et al., 2022), there has been either a repetition of the variables being studied with it or there have been some dimensions that have not been fully investigated. Hence, through focusing the current research on the chosen variables, this reach aims to demonstrate, investigate and explain the relationships that exist amongst them. It will enhance the understanding on how the impact of functional and emotional strategies influences purchase intention and next to explore the moderating role of subjective norms in association to brand attitude (mediator). Results will emphasize the significance of the study variables from the consumer's viewpoint and under the context of the Theory of reasoned action. Brands can use the findings of this research to better

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understand the art of creating higher quality and uniqueness of product for their customers.

## **2. Literature review and hypothesis development**

In brand management studies, functional benefit positioning is defined as “The exchange of key utilitarian benefits gained through usage of a product” (Crawford, 1985; Keller, 1993). Literature also indicates that “It is mostly gained from features of a product or brand and is likely to be functional in nature” (Keller, 1993; Gutman, 1982).

Functional benefits relate with the particular performance of the good or service. Utilitarian attributes relate with tangible features of the product that fulfill practical or functional needs. Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish a good product based on its tangible and utilitarian attributes in a competing market environment and hence consumers shift their attention to the cost of owning the product (Ahmad et al., 2015). Moreover, when the cost of shopping is less, the normal utilitarian advantage per gaining cost increases. (Kumagai and Nagasawa, 2018). Hence, functional attributes of a brand refer to all the tangible benefits offered by the brand, for example, the capability to perform better than other products.

Several discussions within the literature divide added values into two aspects, with a brand offering emotional and functional value. We now take a look at literature relevant to our second independent variable, emotional benefit positioning. It is seen that emotional values relate with the brand that are also termed and known as symbolic values, relating to intangible aspects, feelings and symbolic values which fulfill the needs of consumer’s self-expression (Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Nguyen et al., 2017). It is the emotional benefits inherent in the brand which gives social signals on behalf of their target consumers (Azmawani, et al., 2015). Hence, the emotional values relate to the personality of consumers that consists of freedom of expression, style, fashion, status, happiness, leisure and exclusiveness (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). With regard to the evaluation of emotional brands, brands that score high on the intangible characteristic or attributes involve preference for recommendations by family, friends and relatives regarding what to purchase from a specific brand.

In past research, it is argued that both emotional and functional benefits are important facets that impact the brand attitude (Baumann et al., 2015). Emotional benefit and functional benefits both show egoistic value goals (Hartmann & Ibanez, 2012). Past research outlines that the issue of brand marketing communication may not be important when customers are concerned only about the utilitarian benefit of brands and ignore whether the marketing activities are in accordance with the brand or product (Amin et al., 2011). Products that differ in terms of emotional value and provide similar functional benefits generate significant difference in purchase intention. That is, purchasers are not influenced by various brands rather, they are attracted to utilitarian benefits which shows some persistence or stability of utilitarian qualities in brand development. (Steg et al., 2014). Literature on brand attitude also demonstrates that



consumers consider the value attached to the emotional benefits of the product (Braun et al., 2016). This distinction may become visible when the product associates with and fit into group disposition and individual characteristics. (Batra et al., 2012; Park et al., 2012).

Hence, applying symbolic positioning may be effective for hedonic items including garments and expensive vehicles (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000; Schmitt, 1999; Yu et al., 2018). Conversely, functional goods group may include a reliable washing machine, laptops or electronic equipment (Keller et al., 2002). These functional products are very consistent with utility focused consumer's needs and hence, also additionally effective than experiential benefits (Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Abzari et al., 2014; Matthes et al., 2014).

Previous studies outline that both emotional and functional benefits are essential to the positioning of brands (Fuchs et al., 2010). However, self-expressive or emotional benefits have a symbolic and socialization impact which lasts in the mind of consumers (Lin et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020). Taking a view into the literature pertaining to our mediating variable brand attitude, it is a psychological proclamation that asserts positive or negative influence on the customer. Brands are important to companies since they impact customer choice/preferences (Bairrada et al., 2018). Accordingly, brands need to have the correct marketing and branding strategy to develop a favorable brand attitude in the heart and mind of customers. Strong brands give a good impression in the mind of shoppers (Kartika & Kusuma, 2016).

Brand attitudes are valuable in anticipating customer intention to purchase. How brand attitude is formed and how it can impact significant behavior have been discussed in depth in the available literature (Olsen et al., 2014; Park et al., 2012; Schuitema et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2018). Past research outlines that there is a significant impact of brand attitude on buying intention. The variable of Brand attitude is the result of evaluation of the brand, which incorporates factors, for example, brand image, awareness, and relationship of qualities, features, benefits and attributes (Mohseni et al., 2018; Sangroya et al., 2017).

Discussing the dependent variable purchase intention, it is explained in the literature as the "possibility of purchasing a brand" (Esch et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2011). Several literature studies support that buyer attitude is positively related to purchase intention (Kim & Chung, 2011). When customer assesses new product knowledge, this influences their inclusion toward the product and may impact their buying intention. When customers acquire more information related to the product, the likelihood of their buying a specific product is considerably higher (Adis et al., 2015; Augusto et al., 2018).

In terms of connection between buying intention and attitude toward the brands and product or service, the result of studies shows that attitude toward the brand positively influences buying intention. (Hsu, 2019). Studies have explored that attitude toward

brands reflects consumer brand choice and preference of the brand. The behavior intention model is generally used to measure buyers' attitude and intention (Andrews et al., 2017). It outlines that a robust relation exists among intention and attitude; hence, attitude is viewed as essential for anticipating behavior intention (Gustin & Ha, 2014).

Discussing the theoretical underpinnings of this research, our study extracts the variable of subjective norms from the renowned 'Theory of Reasoned Action' (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1983). Subjective norms act as a moderator in our framework, which have been introduced to social sciences through the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1983). According to the theory of reasoned action, individual behavioral intention rests on two factors: attitude toward some behaviour and perception of societal pressures to act or not to act in a particular manner, stated to as the subjective norms (Garg et al., 2018). Going further into our review of subjective norms, it reflects the part of the theory of reasoned action that embodies social influence (Ajzen, 1988). As per literature, subjective norms reflect social pressure and influence that can be positive or negative (Ansary et al., 2017). Many past studies have explored subjective norms to impact buying intention (Bahar et al., 2017). It is the degree of one's own feeling about social pressure from other individuals or groups. Former research studies investigated that positive associations exist among behavioral intention and subjective norms. (Ajzen, 1991).

Subjective Norms are one's own feeling about social pressure from other individuals or groups. (Butler et al., 2012). Subjective norm is individual perception of behavior which is affected by other influencers. In existing studies, it has been shown that customers' behavioral intention to perform a specific activity are an element of subjective norms (Amaro et al., 2015). It is an individual's perception of the social pressure to act in a specific way or manner (Yang & Jolly, 2009). Companions, family, relatives and groups are the ones which help in structuring up the subjective norms. The intent to act in a specific way depend upon such classification of individuals. Subjective norms are recognizable opinions of individuals who are significant for an individual and influence their decision-making process. Furthermore, they also force a person to act or not to act out a specific kind of activity (Garg et al., 2018). These subjective norms can be a result of the experience of a person or the learnings that she or he has gained cumulatively (Chen et al., 2012).

In light of the above literature review, the following hypotheses are devised:

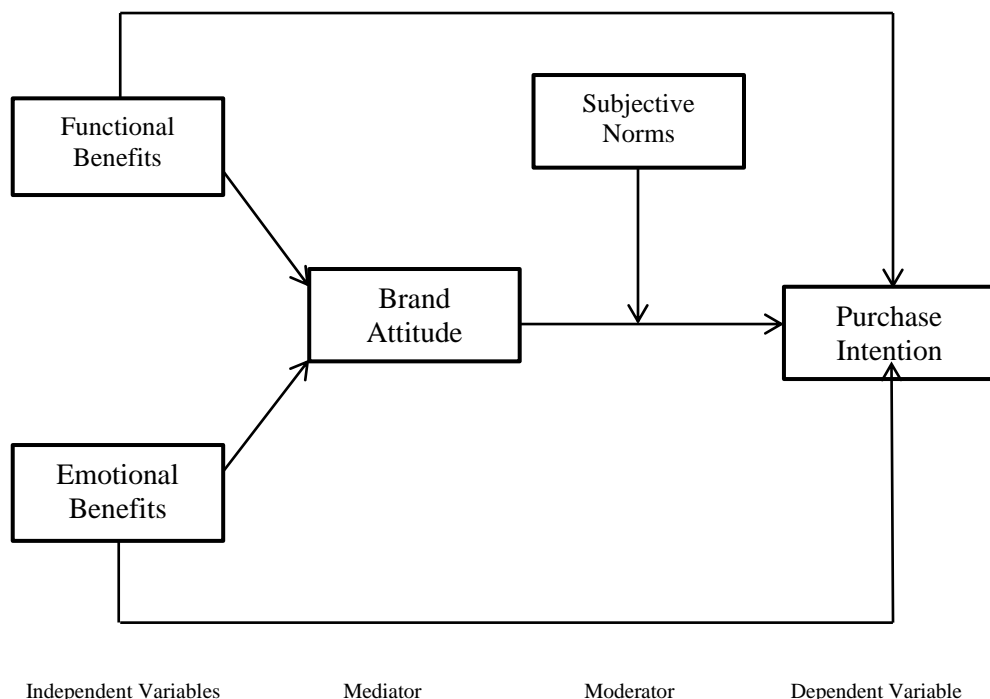
- H1:** There exists a significant relation between Functional Benefit and Brand Attitude
- H2:** There exists a significant relation between Emotional Benefit and Brand Attitude.
- H3:** There exists a significant relation between Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention
- H4:** Subjective Norms moderate the relation between Brand Attitude and Purchase intention
- H5:** Brand Attitude mediates the relation between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention

**H6:** Brand Attitude mediates the relation between Emotional Benefit and Purchase intention

**H7:** There exists a significant relation between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention

**H8:** There exists a significant relation between Emotional Benefit and Purchase intention

The following theoretical framework stems from the above hypotheses and literature review presented earlier.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Framework**

### 3. Research Design

In order to collect data for this hypothesis testing study, survey questionnaires were employed, with items adopted from various research studies. Responses were recorded anonymously to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. Half of the questionnaires were distributed by hand and half were filled online. The online data collection was done through google forms. Quantitative approach was employed in this research due to the use of empirical approach for the testing of the study's hypothesis model. Cross sectional design was utilized to collect data in a single shot from respondents, through their voluntary participation.

The variables of this study were measured at an individual level and consumers of the brand were used to collect responses. This research's study setting was Natural, conducted in a non-contrived setting of consumers to avoid any bias or manipulation. Convenience sampling technique was used with a sample of 200 respondents who were regular consumers of high end, leading clothing brands. The sample size was deduced on the basis of item response theory, i.e., Nunnally's (1978) formula ( $20 \times 10 = 200$ ), with 200 as the final number to have adequate responses. Data Analysis was done through SPSS software, using Reliability, Correlation and Model 14 of PROCESS Macro by Hayes.

### **3.1 Defining the study variables:**

#### **3.1.1 Functional Benefit**

It is understood as exchange of the key benefit gain through usage of product or owning a brand" (Crawford, 1985; Keller, 1993). It is mostly gained from features of the product or brand and is likely to be functional in nature (Keller, 1993; Gutman, 1982). The selection of Functional benefits is highly relevant for our study due to it's immense practicality in the latest contemporary research on the topic (Wang et al., 2022; Gilal et al., 2022; He et al., 2022)

#### **3.1.2 Emotional Benefit**

Emotional values relate with the brand, that are also termed as symbolic values, relating to intangible aspects, feelings and symbolic values that fulfill the needs of consumers self-expression. It includes benefits that satisfy or provide symbolic values; provide consumers with a positive perception or feelings of self-fulfillment (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). This variable is worthy of exploration in relation to purchase intention, as evident from latest research articles (Olsen et al., 2022; Rua et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022)

#### **3.1.3 Purchase intention**

"The possibility of purchasing a brand is said to be buying or purchase intention" (Esch et al., 2006) (Wu et al., 2011). Purchase intention has been studied in great detail in various sectors (Chakraborty et al., 2022; Narayanan et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Bu et al., 2022) but is yet under explored for high end clothing brands in the study country

#### **3.1.4 Subjective Norms**

Subjective Norms mean the perceived social pressure either to act or not to act with influence of others (Ajzen, 1991). However, it is also one's feeling about social pressure from other individuals or groups. (Butler et al., 2012). Subjective norms has been selected as a moderator due to its relevance in social sciences as evident from a number of contemporary articles (Winter et al., 2022; Roh et al., 2022; Izquierdo et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2022)

#### **3.1.5 Brand Attitude**

Studies define brand attitude as a customer's overall favorable or unfavorable valuation of a certain brand or product. It is a consumer's response or behavior to a particular

brand or product (Lee, 2008). This variable has been selected due to its immense practicality in brand management research (Vidyanata et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2022; De Keyzer et al., 2022; Zanger et al., 2022; Haryanto et al., 2022)

## **3.2 Measures**

### **3.2.1 Functional and Emotional Benefits**

The measurement of functional and emotional benefits was carried out separately by using Woo & Kim's (2018) 3 item measure, which has been used by other researchers as well. All items were appraised through a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Always to (5) Never.

A sample item for functional benefit is "Buying from this brand offers value for money" while a sample item for emotional benefit is "I feel relaxed after purchasing from this brand"

### **3.2.2 Purchase Intention**

The measurement of this variable was carried out by using a 4-item measure by Watanabe, (2014). All items were appraised through a five-point Likert scale, which contains a range from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) strongly Agree. A sample item for purchase intention is "I am likely to buy again from this brand"

### **3.2.3 Subjective Norms**

The measurement of subjective norms was carried out by using a 3-item measure (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980),(Supanat, 2012) through a five-point Likert scale which contains a range from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. A sample item for subjective norms is "My friends would think that I should choose this brand"

### **3.2.4 Brand Attitude**

The measurement of brand attitude was carried out by using a 3-item measure (Colliander & Dahlen 2011) through a five-point Likert scale. A sample item for this variable is "This brand is favorable".

## **4. Results and discussion**

### **4.1 Reliability Analysis**

Reliability analysis is then carried out on the collected data, to compute and judge the internal consistency of variables. The summary of results is given below.

#### **4.1.1 Interpretation:**

Cronbach alpha values of above 0.7 indicate good reliability. The table above portrays that all five variables; Functional benefit, Emotional Benefit, Brand Attitude, Subjective Norms, Purchase intention have Chronbach's Alpha values above 0.7, hence, all variables are reliable. Functional benefits is reliable with Cronbach's Alpha value of .713. Emotional benefits is reliable with Cronbach's Alpha value of .765. Brand Attitude is at .701. Subjective norm is reliable with Cronbach's Alpha value of .751 and purchase intention is at .713.

**Table 1. Reliability of the instrument**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N items
Functional benefit	.713	3
Emotional Benefit	.765	3
Brand Attitude	.701	3
Subjective norms	.751	3
Purchase intention	.713	4

## 4.2 Correlation Analysis

The Correlation matrix results are shown in the table below.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix**

	Functional Benefit	Emotional Benefit	Brand Attitude	Subjective Norms	Purchase Intention
Functional Benefit	1				
Emotional Benefit	.379**	1			
Brand Attitude	.532**	.548**	1		
Subjective norms	.360**	.341**	.481**	1	
Purchase Intention	.563**	.478**	.674**	.527**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 4.2.1 Interpretation:

The correlation of the study variables is shown as above. It is seen that all the variables demonstrate a significantly positive correlation; at  $p < 0.01$ . The correlation between functional and emotional benefit is .379 so there is moderate positive correlation between functional and emotional benefit. The correlation between functional benefit and brand attitude is .532 which shows moderate to strong correlation. The correlation between functional and subjective norms is moderate at .360. The correlational between functional and Purchase intention is .563 while correlation between emotional benefit and brand attitude is .548; both are strong. The correlation between emotional benefit and subjective norms is .341 which indicates moderate correlation. The correlation between emotional benefit and purchase intention is .478 which shows moderate correlation. The correlation between Brand attitude and subjective norm is .481 which

also shows the moderate correlation. The correlation between brand attitude and purchase intention is strong, i.e., .674. Same is the case for subjective norms and purchase intention which has strong correlation of .527

### **4.3 Regression Analysis of Hypotheses Statements**

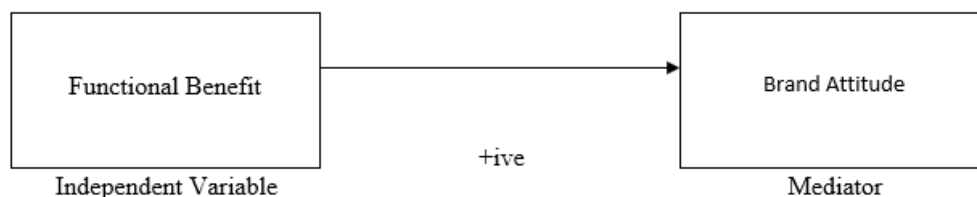
The proposed hypothesis of the study, Regression analysis is carried out. Model 14 of Process (Preacher & Hayes, 2005) has been utilized. The bootstrap level has been kept at 5000 and the confidence interval 95%

#### **4.3.1 Model 1 Summary:**

The value of R shows that the correlation is 53.1% between brand attitude and Functional benefit positioning. The value of R square is 28%, which shows that the amount of variation in Brand attitude, due to functional positioning, is 28%. The value of f (F=77.99) and p=0.000, shows that the model is good fitted.

#### **4.3.2 Hypothesis 1**

This hypothesis is supported as p value is 0.00. Indicating positive and significant relation between functional benefit and brand attitude .1 unit increase in functional benefit would lead to .48 increase in brand attitude.



#### **4.3.3 Model 2 Summary:**

The value of R shows that the correlation between purchase intention and other variables is 74.8%. The value of R square is 55.9 %, which shows that there is 55.9% variation in purchase intention due to interaction with other variables. The value of F (F=61.9332) and p=0.000 show that the model is good fitted.

#### **4.3.4 Hypothesis 3**

This hypothesis is supported as p value is 0.00. Indicating positive and significant relation between brand attitude and purchase intention .1 unit increase in brand attitude would lead to .1229 increase in Purchase Intention.

#### **4.3.5 Hypothesis 7**

This hypothesis is supported as p value is 0.00. Indicating positive and significant relation between functional benefit and purchase intention .1 unit increase in functional benefit would lead to .209 increase in brand attitude.

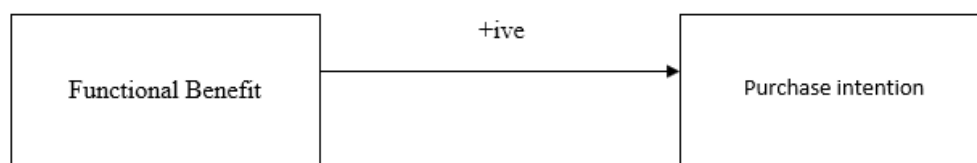
#### 4.3.6 Hypothesis 4

The p value of Int\_1 is 0.095 and LLCI (-.0214, ULCI (.2903) .which shows that there is no moderation. Subjective norm does not have a significant impact. Interaction term between moderator subjective norm and dependent variable (purchase intention). We hypothesis

Highest order unconditional interaction shows that the interaction explains .0065 conditional variant of purchase intention.

#### 4.3.7 Direct effect of X on Y

The results show an interaction value of ULCI (.3029) and LLCI (.1169), and since both values are positive, the hypothesis is supported. Furthermore, (p=0.000 < 0.05). Direct effect of Functional benefit on purchase intention their p value .0.000 show the significant relation.

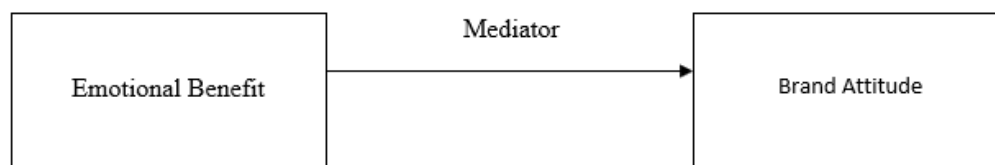


#### 4.3.8 Indirect effect

The values of Boot UCLI (.1432) and Boot LLCI (-.0061) indicate that the indirect influence of Functional benefit (X) on purchase intention (Y) through the mediation of subjective norm is positive and insignificant as both values are not positive. This result does not support the hypothesis that brand attitude plays a mediating role between Functional benefit and intention to purchase.

#### 4.3.9 Model 1 Summary:

The value of R shows that the correlation is 54.7% between brand attitude and emotional benefit positioning. The value of R square is 30%, which shows that the amount of variation in Brand attitude, due to emotional positioning, is 30%. The value of f (F=84.861) and p=0.000, proves that the model is good fitted.



#### 4.3.10 Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 (Emotional benefit is positively related to Brand attitude) is supported, with results showing an interaction value of ULCI (.5626) and LLCI (.3642), hence, the positive values support the first hypothesis. Moreover, (p=0.000 < 0.05) and the



coefficient value of 0.4634 indicates a positive and significant relationship between emotional benefit and Brand attitude i.e., one unit change in emotional benefit results in a change of Brand attitude by 0.463.

**4.3.11 Model 2 Summary:**

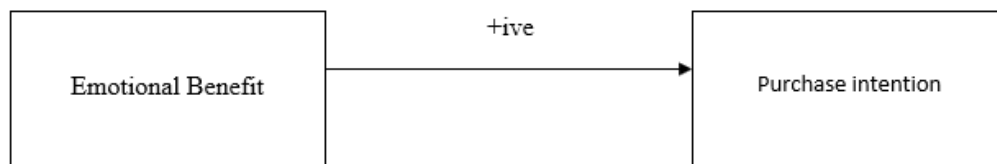
The value of R shows that the correlation between purchase intention and other variables is 72.4%. The value of R square is 52.5 %, which shows that there is 55.2% variation in purchase intention due to interaction with other variables. The value of F (F=54.0000) and p=0.000 show that the model is good fitted.

**4.3.12 Hypothesis 8**

This hypothesis is supported as p value is 0.03. Indicating positive and significant relation between emotional benefit and purchase intention. One unit increase in functional benefit would lead to .09 increase in purchase intention. The p value of Int\_1 is .1247 and LLCI (-0.353, ULCI (.288) .which shows that there is no moderation. Subjective norm does not have a significant impact. Interaction term between moderator subjective norm and dependent variable (purchase intention). We hypothesis Highest order unconditional interaction shows that the interaction explains .0058 conditional variant of purchase intention.

**4.3.13 Direct effect of X on Y**

The results show an interaction value of ULCI (.1868) and LLCI (0.0059), and since both values are positive, the hypothesis is supported. Furthermore, (p=0.03< 0.05) .Direct effect of emotional benefit on purchase intention their p value .036 show the significant relation.



The values of Boot UCLI (-.0216) and Boot LLCI (0.1472) indicate that the indirect influence of emotional benefit (X) on purchase intention (Y) through the mediation of subjective norm is positive and insignificant as both values are not positive. This result does not support the 5th hypothesis of the study, according to which, brand attitude mediates the relationship between emotional benefit and purchase intention.

**4.4 Summary of Hypotheses Results**

The following table depicts a summary of hypothesis results:

**Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses Results**

	Hypothesis Statements	Results
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H <sub>1</sub>	There exists a significant relation between Functional Benefit and Brand Attitude	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	There exists a significant relation between Emotional Benefit and Brand Attitude.	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	There exists a significant relation between Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	Subjective Norms moderate the relation between Brand Attitude and Purchase intention	Not Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	Brand Attitude mediates the relation between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention	Not Supported
H <sub>6</sub>	Brand Attitude mediates the relation between Emotional Benefit and Purchase intention	Not Supported
H <sub>7</sub>	There exists a significant relation between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention	Supported
H <sub>8</sub>	There exists a significant relation between Emotional Benefit and Purchase intention	Supported

## 5. Discussion

The key purpose of this research is to test the framework that has been proposed by this study. This framework has been developed with the help of previously existing literature, demonstrating possible links between the study variables; functional and emotional positioning, subjective norms, brand attitude and intention to purchase. In order to empirically examine and analyze these relationships, survey questionnaires were employed to gather data from respondents, consisting of consumers of the brands. The results of the analysis turned out to be both supportive and not supportive of the claims made by this study. Functional benefit has a stronger effect than emotional benefit because the customers are more effected by the quality and designs of clothing brand. Features of the brand are more important for the consumers. Following is a discussion on each of the hypothesis, separately.

The first hypothesis of the study “There is a significant relationship between Functional Benefit and Brand Attitude” was supported by the data analysis. The regression analysis

conducted on the data established a significantly positive relation amongst the two variables. Hence, companies must strive to build more utilitarian and unique features in their products.

The second hypothesis of the study “There is a significant relationship between Emotional Positioning and Brand Attitude” was supported by the data analysis. The regression analysis conducted on the collected data established a significantly positive relationship between the variables. Past research shows that more frequently, people make decisions to choose a brand or product on the basis of emotional benefits. In order to build a strong brand attitude and to differentiate a brand, it must set a strong emotional relation with the consumers. On one hand this requires the consistent monitoring of competitive activities and on the other hand, an in-depth understanding of the consumers emotional needs (Janiszewska & Insch (2018)

The third hypothesis of the study “There is a significant relationship between Brand Attitude and Purchase Intention” was supported by the data analysis. The regression analysis conducted on the data established a positive and significant relationship between the two variables. Consumers, by altering their consumption level and patterns will find solutions to their needs and wants. (Rehman & Khyzer, 2013). Brand attitude and quality are the components of the brand where upon purchase intention is dependent (Tariq et al,2013). These functions of the brand have a robust impact on intention to purchase. In terms of the connection between brand attitude and purchase intention, the result of studies showed that brand attitude is positively influenced by buyer intention (Hsu, L.- C. 2019; Themba et al., 2019).

The fourth hypothesis of our research “Subjective Norms moderate the relationship between Brand Attitude and Purchase intention” was not supported by the results. The regression analysis conducted on the collected data established an insignificant relationship between the two variables. Previous research studies have shown that the role of subjective norms in shaping intention is weaker as compared to the influence caused by attitude. In addition, the research study of (Krueger, & Carsrud, 2000) finds that subjective norms are not linked with attitude and intentions of people. Icek Ajzen (1991) who is the writer of the theory of planned behavior, elaborates this perspective by stating that intentions have a deep association with intrinsic factors like behavioral control and negative attitude. Individual behavior is effected by a variety of factors including past experiences regarding purchase of a particular product or brand, convenience perceptions, monetary restrictions, and several other factors, that increase or decrease the degree of intensity of this behavior. These are the possible reasons for the insignificant role of subjective norms.

The fifth hypothesis of our research “Brand Attitude mediates the relationship between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention” was not supported by the results. Our regression analysis conducted on the collected data established brand attitude to play an insignificant role of mediation between functional benefits and purchase intention. This can be attributed to consumers previous positive experience with the brand and presence of high degree of brand loyalty and trust which can be a latent variable for future studies.

The sixth hypothesis of our research “Brand Attitude mediates the relationship between Emotional Benefit and Purchase intention” is not supported in this study. The relation turned out to be insignificant. Negative information/publicity negatively affects consumers’ attitudes toward the brand. Such publicity may be quite common for the clothing industry. Any kind of negativity can harm the customer’s relationship with brand. Hence, based on the findings of our research, it can be implied that negative image of the brand or company can be considered as a homogeneous variable that hurts brand attitude. (Jung et al., 2016).

The seventh hypothesis of our research “There is a significant relationship between Functional Benefit and Purchase intention” was supported by the data results. Our regression analysis conducted on the data established a significantly positive relation amongst the two variables. Functional benefits relate with the particular performance of the goods and service. They are targeted towards meeting basics needs among consumers, to such an extent that their requirements are fulfilled with the usage of the products. Utilitarian attributes relate with a brand’s tangible features of the product that fulfill the user’s functional needs. (Kumagai and Nagasawa, 2018).

The eighth hypothesis of the research “There is a significant relationship between Emotional Benefit and Purchase Intention” was supported by the data results. The regression analysis conducted on the data established a significantly positive relation amongst the two variables. When customers witness promotional ideas from a large number of brands having same functional attributes and qualities, they will value the emotional benefits which satisfy their social expression needs, leading to purchase intention.

Both functional and emotional/symbolic benefit positioning strategies of brand develop purchase intention. (Kumagai and Nagasawa, 2018). Keeping in view the above discussion, this research also compliments previous credible research studies on the subject of Marketing, branding and positioning (Olsen et al., 2022; Rua et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Vidyanata et al., 2022; Hwang et al., 2022; De Keyzer et al., 2022; Zanger et al., 2022; Haryanto et al., 2022; Gilal et al., 2018, 2020, 2022; Li et al., 2022).

## **6. Implications of the study**

It is pertinent to mention that our research has multiple implications for scholars and practitioners. As highlighted earlier, our study extracts the variable of subjective norms from the renowned 'Theory of Reasoned Action' (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1983). According to the theory of reasoned action, individual behavioral intention rests on two factors: attitude toward some behaviour and perception of societal pressures to act or not to act in a particular manner, stated to as subjective norms (Garg et al., 2018). However, in our findings, subjective norms do not moderate purchase intention as in case of premium or high end consumer brands, the brand equity or image may have a relatively major role to play in purchase intention. Hence, it is implied that if the brand image and goodwill is strong, other factors like price or subjective norms will have less of an impact. This finding is also an addition to the current theory of reasoned action as it explores a new dimension of the theory. It also presents an important implication for practitioners to focus on building long term brand equity and also for scholars to further explore the role of brand image and brand equity as moderators.

## **7. Limitations**

- 1) Since this study specifically focused on only two positioning strategies, hence the sample selected for data collection only comprised of consumers that understand the concept of these strategies. Those who evaluate brand through any other platforms were not included including variables like brand trust and brand love.
- 2) The current study has a cross-sectional time frame, which means that data collection took place at a single moment in time. Along with the chances of common method bias being present, the chances of the responses being changed over time is also possible.
- 3) The study was conducted in the pandemic era. Results may vary in more normalized conditions.

## **8. Future Directions**

- 1) Since subjective norms and positioning strategies both are diverse concepts, future research can study the addition of novel variables in a mediating role, for example, socio economic classification of consumers.
- 2) Future studies can also employ longitudinal studies to carry out their research in a more evaluative way.
- 3) The study could be carried out in different sectors as well.
- 4) Brand trust variable can be added to the relation of our current research model.

## **9. Conclusion**

This research was aimed at giving conclusive knowledge regarding the dynamics around how functional and emotional positioning strategies impact purchase intention

while exploring subjective norms in a moderating role and brand attitude as a mediator. The data collected from consumers of the brand, through survey questionnaires, helped in showing and explaining the roles that the variables played. Numerous prior studies have been used to explain these relationships with many prior findings supporting the current study's proposed hypothesis. This paper widens the research on these relationships by adding in subjective norms, which is a variable that has not been the center of focus for research scholars in the past. The results of the study will also help brand leaders in choosing the most suitable strategies for the brands to compete in their respective markets.

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## Role of Distributive Justice in Relationship between Inspirational Motivation and Employees Performance

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### Abstract

Leadership is all about the inspiration to support followers to show the desired performances in achieving anticipated goals. Inspirational motivation has been considered as a vital attribute of leadership for improving efficiency and performance at workplaces. Similarly, fairness perception about the distribution of organizational resources is a matter of greater importance for workforces' thereby keeping in view their diligence, motivation, and performance. The current study aimed at examining the facilitating role of distributive justice in the relationship between inspirational motivation and employees' performance. In this connection, data was collected from workforces hailing from selected higher institutions and analyzed through different statistical procedures to find answers to hypotheses developed from theoretical frameworks. The results of the current study are significant and informative for leadership and stakeholders of higher educational institutions in order to revisit their policies regarding leadership and employees in the context of developing countries like Pakistan.

**Keywords:** *Inspirational Motivation, Distributive Justice, Employees Performance & HEIs*

**JEL Code:** C12, C83, D63, L25

### 1. Introduction

Leadership has gained progressive development in human service organizations due to its important role in inspiring individuals to act like human machines. In this connection, the ship acts as a dynamic force for organizations including higher education institutions to survive in competitive situations by utilizing human capabilities. However, for the spirited journey, from survival to development, leadership needs the strong support of the followers to achieve desired credibility (Adalberto & Ruben, 2002). In this connection, the leaders' behavior is vital for inspiring their followers to show their utmost commitment and performance to achieve desired success. Therefore, workforces' sent performances are the actual parameter of institutional performance (Armstrong & Baron, 2005).

Hence, the inspiring and fair behavior of leaders is considered an important tool for employees' motivation and performance. In this regard, over inspirational motivation, leaders provide vision to their employees and inspire them to show efforts to achieve the said vision for the bright future of the institutions (Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008).

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The leaders, through inspirational motivation, provide emotional support and motivate the employees to improve their knowledge, skills, and capabilities by performing their responsibilities wholeheartedly (Rukmani, Ramesh & Krishnan, 2010). Higher institutions are more concerned with the development of the workforces' abilities, skills, knowledge, and performance. In this connection, leaders' inspirational motivation is an important tool in nurturing employees' competencies, skills, and performance (Berendt, Christofi, Kasibhatla & Maruffi, 2012). Inspired employees, through their potential and efforts, can apprehend desired standards only when they have persistent support from their leaders. The leader supports the innovative ideas of the employees concerning the prevailing issues and provides the guidelines for suitable resolution (Abasilim, Ugochukwu & David, 2014). The employees in turn feel respect and self-confidence when they feel that their idea is esteemed by concerned leaders (Doucet, Fredette, Simard & Tremblay, 2015). Consequently, the employees' performance gets enhanced when they feel enthused due to the persistent support from their leader (Amjad, Sabri, Ilyas & Hameed, 2015). Hence, institutional objectives can be pursued successfully when the potential and efforts of employees at workplaces are managed effectively and efficiently together with the altitude of leader fair interaction with employees and just dissemination of resources in the institution.

Fairness at workplaces is vital for the credibility of higher education institutions as employees who perceive equality in institutional decisions about procedure, interaction and distribution of institutional resources are likely to show greater commitment and higher performances (Khuong & Hoang, 2016). Therefore, on the part of leadership and management, inspirational motivation and fair decisions towards employees are vital for enthusiasm and performance. The just behavior of a leader is imperative for employees' better performances as fairness at workplaces leads to higher-level morals values coupled with the institutional norms and standards (Kezar & Elizabeth, 2017). Similarly, fairness about equal distribution of the institutional resources like rewards (intrinsic and extrinsic), perks, and privileges and recognition are vital for employees' sustainable performances in the institutions (Mylona & Mihail, 2018). The justice has also been recognized globally as significant phenomenon for encouraging the social behavior of individuals (Moyo & Nomngcoyiya, 2020). Therefore, individualized consideration is crucial for the employees' respectable performances, however, this interaction is predictable to be more strengthen when fairness prevails in the linkages between the motivation and performance in the institutions.

## **2. Literature Review**

In higher education institutions, the leadership journey starts with establishing a vision where others (employees) are required to own and share the said vision (Haslam & Platow, 2001). This vision is concerned generally with easing, inspiring, and allowing others (employees) to show their utmost potential and performance towards the realization of institutional objectives (Schaubroeck, Lam & Cha, 2007). In this regard, leadership main responsibility is to inspire workforces by concentrating on their behaviors, attitudes, equalities, and moralities to bring them in line with institutional norms and values (Paracha, Qamar, Mirza & Waqas, 2012). So, solid understanding is

directly needed on the part of leaders and employees where leaders are required to provide direction and inspiration, and employees are required to put their wholehearted performance (Tiara & Putranto, 2015). Therefore, academic leadership is viewed as charismatic and visionary and is responsible for inspirational motivation to reshape the employees' attitude and behavior as well as fair decisions towards them to achieve desired standards and credibility of institutions (Andriani, Kesumawati & Kristiawan, 2018).

### **2.1 Inspirational Motivation**

Through inspirational motivation, leaders communicate a vision to subordinates with confidence and motivate them to emphasize on desired vision by utilizing their efforts, knowledge, and skills (Bass, 1997). The leader develops the employees' interest in the assigned tasks and tries to nurture their perceptions through fair decisions at workplaces (Raffrety & Griffin, 2004). The employees, in turn, are expected to show autonomy, commitment, and trust to achieve assigned tasks thereby performing their responsibilities with utmost diligence (Bass & Bass, 2008). Consequently, inspirational motivation helps in facing a challenging situation wherein a leader encourages creative ideas, builds enthusiasm, and nurtures team spirit among employees (Berendt et al., 2012). This, in turn, develops the employees' trust as well as helps in building a strong image of the leaders in institutions (Fatima & Aini, 2015). Therefore, enthusiasm and motivation are the main elements that help in nurturing employees' attitudes and behavior (interests) thereby inspiring them towards virtuous performances which further helps in ensuring the institutional vision efficiently and effectively (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

### **2.2 Employees Performance**

The job performance is the multidimensional phenomenon that has been widely explored through different models (Ming-Sum, 1998). During the past decades, the improvements in employees' knowledge and capabilities are dynamic for the institutions which ultimately implicates the hope for laying the foundation for innovation and development (Griffin, Neal & Neale, 2000). These are vital parameters that help in providing basics for creativity, excellence, and effectiveness in institutions (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). In this regard, performance is well-thought-out as employees' abilities to use their skills and knowledge professionally (intellectual and physical dimensions). The literature reveals the leaders' inspiration and supervision are dynamic forces for the employees' better performances in institutions (Huang, Joyce & Gong, 2010). In this connection, the researchers on organizational behavior have made their efforts to examine the diverse nature of relationships as exists between management and employees (Katarzyna & Woszczyznaa, 2015). The leadership and management have a significant link toward the performance of employees. Performances of employees are the output of leadership effectiveness which leads to institutional performance (Zeb, Ahmad & Saeed, 2018).

### **2.3 Distributive Justice**

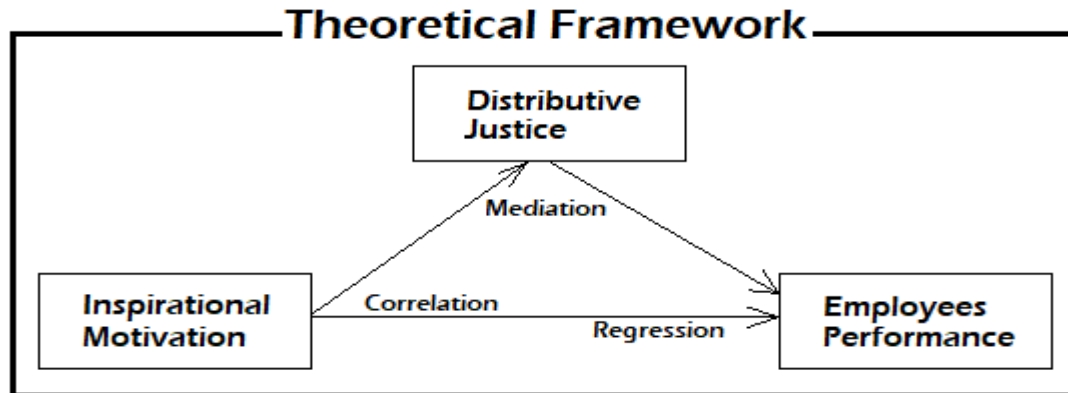
Distributive justice is the primary and foremost dimension of organizational justice which ensures equal distribution (without any discrimination) of the organizational outcomes among the workforces in the institutions (Markovsky & Younts, 2001). Distributive justice is recognized over various dimensions in an institutional environment like the distribution of responsibilities, tasks, rewards (intrinsic & extrinsic), recognitions, and other perks and privileges (Blader & Tyler, 2005). Organizational justice with three Rs (retributive justice, restorative justice, and reconciliation) is phenomenal in shaping individuals' behavior (Clark, 2008). Therefore, distributive decisions are influential and dynamic factors about job satisfaction, commitment, and performance of employees. So, employees' performance is contingent upon their perception of fairness in distributive parameters (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010). Employees' perception, concerning distributive fairness, helps in strengthen in grand shadowing of their interests toward the institutional vision. Distributive justice helps shape employees' attitudes and behavior optimistically (Thamna, Hossam & Elanain, 2014). Consequently, the leaders' inspirational motivation and employees' fair perception are key elements towards better performances in institutions (Frenkel & Bednall, 2016; Mauludin & Endang, 2018).

#### **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is the structure that supports or holds specific theory and which further defines the manners towards the applicability of the said theory in a specific context as outlined in the research problem. The theoretical framework helps in understanding and validating the concepts and theories which the researcher is trying to explore in the specific environment. The selection of specific concepts from existing research studies and its conversion into a theoretical framework is an important part of the research. In this regard, the theoretical framework of this study comprises different research concepts/theories which are used as the independent, dependent and mediating variables to explore them in the native environment by applying the statistical procedures to chase the hypotheses that emerged from the theoretical framework.

#### **3 Problem Statement**

The inspirational motivation is an effective attribute of leadership that is used for inspiring employees towards higher performance leading to the effective achievement of desired objectives. Similarly, the fairness in procedures and distribution of institutional resources is also a phenomenon of greater importance for the leadership as well as concerned employees which remained the leading and burning issues all the time. The employees' justice perception can increase or decrease the level of performance in the institution. In this connection, there is a certain complication in defining the performances in a specific manner as it is the cross-functioning of various parameters. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is concerned with the role of mediator (distributive justice) in the relationship between inspirational motivation and employees' performance in the context of higher educational institutions.



**Figure: 1 The Theoretical Framework**

### 3.1 Research Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: The predictors are positively and significantly correlated (associated) with the criterion variable

H<sub>2</sub>: The mediator significantly mediates the association between the predictor and criterion variable

## 4. Research Methods

### 4.1 Research Design

The research design is a set of procedures and methods which are used in collecting and examining the variables (measures) of research identified in the problem statement. The research design helps in providing the complete package about research variables (independent, dependent & mediator), data collection methods, and plan for data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Likewise, the research design is the framework that is constructed to find out the answers to research questions (hypotheses). In this regard, the research design of this study is descriptive and inferential (exploratory).

### 4.2 Philosophy and Approach

The research philosophy is the belief of researchers about the procedures which provide the means that how data about existing realities collected, analyzed, and communicated (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). It includes ontology (what is knowledge), epistemology (how to communicate knowledge), and methodology (how to acquire knowledge) (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Therefore, the researcher aimed to explore existing realities (inspirational motivation, distributive justice, and employees' performance) in the native environment by using a specific approach and applying different statistical procedures which are the requirement of the positivism approach, therefore, positivism is the research philosophy of this study. The survey approach has been used in the present study to access the population.

### 4.3 Population and Sample

The population is the collection of large groups of elements in which the researcher is interested and plans to generalize findings obtained through a sample towards the population. As it is time-consuming and sometimes impossible to access the entire population, hence, the researchers mostly rely on samples (Hair, Money, Samuel & Page, 2007). The population of the study comprised of the workforces from two universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this regard, the total population of the study comprises a total of 1760 employees wherein a sample of 326 respondents was selected by using a statistical formula of Taro Yamani (1967). Therefore, a total of 326 questionnaires were distributed among which 304 were recollected. Similarly, the convenient sampling technique was used which is a more reliable and most recommended technique to accessing the sample from the population.

#### **4.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

These include the collection of the most relevant data (information) through secondary and primary sources. The secondary data were collected from relevant articles obtained from online databases while first-hand (primary) data has been collected from the questionnaire (structured) adapted from previous studies on similar issues. Consequently, primary data was then analyzed (interpreted) by using a different statistical procedure like correlation (association) and regression (cause-&-effect and mediation) to find out the answer to research questions that emerged from the theoretical framework. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 22 was used to analyze the data and to reach the conclusion.

#### **4.5 Research Context and Measurement**

The research context of this study is the higher institutions due to their important role in socio-academic and socio-economic development. The administrative employees are the basic units of management in “higher educational institutions”. Therefore, first-hand data was collected from the workforces about the statements (questions) related to the research variables through an adapted instrument concerning inspirational motivation (Bass & Avolio, 2004), employees’ performance (Uphoff & Muharir, 1994) and distributive justice (Greenberg, 1990). In research, the measurement of the adapted version of the questionnaire is an important requirement of research to examine its application in a diverse context. Hence, the measurement was done through the validity and reliability examinations.



## 5. Data analysis

The data analysis is the “process of answering research questions” by applying statistical procedures to test the hypotheses developed from the “theoretical framework”. For this purpose, descriptive and inferential tools have been used to analyze research hypotheses wherein descriptive statistics provide the data about the explanations of “research variables while inferential analysis proves the data about the relationships among research variables”.

### 5.1 Descriptive Results

The descriptive statistics are transitory coefficients (descriptive) which summarize the particular “data set which can be either representation of the entire” population or the sample from the population.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inspirational Motivation	304	3.29	5.28	4.67	0.51
Distributive Justice	304	3.00	6.34	4.24	0.45
Employees Performance	304	3.10	6.24	4.68	0.50
Valid N (list-wise)	304				

Therefore, the descriptive statistics offer information about research variables in terms of the sample size, maximum and minimum response rate of research questions, and their mean and standard deviation.

### 5.2 Reliability Examination

**Table 2 Reliability Statistics**

S.No.	Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Inspirational Motivation	08	0.88
2	Distributive Justice	08	0.77
3	Employees Performance	08	0.84
4	Questionnaire	24	0.90

The Cronbach alpha is used to measure the reliability (internal consistency) that how closely the set of items as a group are interrelated. In this connection, the reliability coefficient (= or > 0.70) is measured as the suitable value in social research studies. Therefore, reliability examination provides substantial information about the measures in terms of internal consistencies likewise the Cronbach value for inspirational

motivation is (0.88), distributive justice is (0.77) and employees' performance is (0.88) while the overall Cronbach value is 0.90. Therefore, the measures have good reliability in terms of internal consistency.

### 5.3 Validity Examination

**Table 3 Validity Examination (Inspirational Motivation)**

KMO and Bartlett's Test			Matrix	
"Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy".		0.70	Items	Score
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	361.19	IM1	0.55
	Df	22	IM2	0.52
	Sig.	0.000	IM3	.474
			<del>IM4</del>	<del>0.27</del>
	Required	Computed	IM5	0.66
KMO test	= or > .7	0.70	IM6	.699
Bartlett's test	= or < 0.05	0.000	IM7	0.48
Factor Loadings	= or > 0.4		<del>IM8</del>	<del>0.37</del>
*Items with < .4 were excluded from analysis.				

**Table 4 Validity Examination (Distributive Justice)**

KMO and Bartlett's Test			Matrix	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.78	Items	Score
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	373.17	DJ1	0.64
	Df	21	DJ2	0.70
	Sig.	0.000	DJ3	0.54
			DJ4	0.63
	Required	Computed	DJ5	0.41
KMO test	= or > .7	0.78	<del>DJ6</del>	<del>0.38</del>
Bartlett's test	= or < 0.05	0.000	DJ7	0.49
Factor Loadings	= or > .4		DJ8	0.53

**Table 5 Validity Examination (Employees Performance)**

KMO and Bartlett's Test			Matrix	
"Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy".		0.78	Items	Score
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	418.12	EP1	0.60
	Df	15	EP2	0.66
	Sig.	0.000	<del>EP3</del>	<del>0.33</del>
			EP4	0.76
	Required	Computed	EP5	0.52
KMO test	= or > 0.7	0.78	EP6	0.82

Bartlett's test	= or < 0.05	0.000	EP7	0.39
Factor Loadings	= or > .4		EP8	0.57

The tables (3, 4 & 5) provide information about KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's tests. The tests of KMO and Bartlett are the methods used for the purpose that how much data is suited for factor analysis. The KMO test deals with "sampling adequacy for each variable in the model and whole model". The acceptable value for KMO is (= or > .7) whereas in the current case, computed values for measures (inspirational motivation = .701), (distributive justice = .779) and (employees' performance = .782) are above the required range. Likewise, Bartlett's test of sphericity examines the assumption that the "correlation matrix is an identity matrix" that designates to what extent the variables are interrelated or unrelated and therefore suitable or inappropriate for structure detection. The small values (= or < .05) of the significance level show that factor analysis might be appropriate for the data. In the present case, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity values for each measure of the study (inspirational motivation = .000), (distributive justice = .000), and (employees' performance = .000) which indicate the suitability of data for factor analysis. Similarly, the "items with factor loading below (.4) have been excluded" from the measure/analysis.

#### 5.4 Testing of Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: The predictors are significantly and positively associated (correlated) with the criterion variable

**Table 6 Correlation Analysis**

		Distributive Justice	Inspirational Motivation
Distributive Justice	Pearson Correlation	1	0.57**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	304	304
Inspirational Motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.60**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	304	304
Employees Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.62**	0.80**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	304	304

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The first hypothesis was about the correlation (association) between predictors and criterion variables. The correlation analysis provides significant information in deciding

the association between research variables. The results show that research variables are significantly and positively correlated with each other likewise the association between distributive justice and inspirational motivation ( $R = 0.57$  &  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ), employees performance and distributive justice ( $R = 0.62$  &  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and employees performance and inspirational motivation ( $R = 0.80$  &  $P\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). As the results provide a statistically significant and positive association among the research variables, therefore, the first hypothesis is accepted.

H<sub>2</sub>: The mediator significantly mediates the relationship between the predictor and criterion variable

**Table 7 Regression Analysis (Computing a)**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	.569	.324	.321	.41661	144.534	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.956	.228		8.56	.000
	Inspirational Motivation	.644	.054	.569	12.02	.000
a. Predictor: (Constant), Inspirational Motivation				b. Dependent Variable: Distributive Justice		

The Barren and Kenny (1986) mediation procedure has been used to observe the mediating role of distributive justice (mediator) in the connection between the inspirational motivation (predictor) and employees’ performance (criterion) variable. The first step of the mediation provides the data about path (A) thereby providing the impact of inspirational motivation on distributive justice. The results show a 34% variance in distributive justice is due to inspirational motivation. The coefficient of regression provides data about the significant impact of inspirational motivation on distributive justice ( $Beta = .644$  &  $P\text{ value} = .000$ ). Therefore, the first step of mediation fulfills the condition that path (a) must be significant in the mediation process.

**Table 8 Regression Analysis (Computing c,  $\hat{c}$  & b)**

Model Summary										
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Change Statistics					
					R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	df 1	df2	F	Sig. F Change

1	.798	.159	.156	.4637	.159	57.003	1	302	57.003	.000	
2	.618	.381	.377	.3983	.223	108.27	1	301	92.763	.000	
Coefficients											
Model				Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.			
				B	Std. Error	Beta					
1	(Constant)			2.769	.254		10.887	.000			
	Inspirational Motivation [C]			.450	.060	.398	7.550	.000			
2	(Constant)			1.649	.244		6.772	.000			
	Inspirational Motivation [ $\hat{C}$ ]			.082	.062	.072	1.308	.192			
	Distributive Justice [B]			.573	.055	.574	10.406	.000			
a. Predictor: Inspirational Motivation      b. Mediator: Distributive Justice											
c. Criterion: Employee Performance											

Table (8) provides the data about (c,  $\hat{c}$  & b) paths of the mediation process thereby providing two regression models. The summary table of the first mediation model shows a 16% variance in employees' performance due to inspirational motivation which has been increased to 38% variance after the inclusion of distributive justice as a mediator. The coefficient of the regression table shows the direct effect (path C) wherein inspirational motivation has a significant impact (Beta = .450 & P value = .000) on employees' performance which fulfills the second condition of the mediation process. Moreover, the third step (path B) also provides significant results by showing the significant impact of a mediator on the criterion variable (Beta = .573 & P value = .000) which also justifies the third condition of mediation. However, the fourth step of mediation ( $\hat{C}$ ) provides significant information in deciding the mediation. As, the change in  $R^2$ , in model one (1) from 16% to 38% in model 2 (two) and the change in Beta value in the direct relationship from (.450) in the path (C) to (.082) in an indirect relationship ( $\hat{C}$ ) thereby changing the P-value of the path (C) from .000 to .192 of ( $\hat{C}$ ) provide enough evidence that distributive justice fully mediates the relationship between inspirational motivation and employees' performance. Therefore, from the results, the second hypothesis is also accepted.

## 6 Discussions and Conclusion

In the higher education context, the management of human resources, in an integral part of institutional processes. The development in employees' performance is a matter of greater importance for the leadership and management of higher institutions (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000; Barnes & Morgeson, 2007). The institutions can achieve desired standards and ranking only when employees show wholehearted performances (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). In this drive, leadership behavior is vital in inspiring and encouraging the workforce towards better performance (Boerner, Eisenbeiss & Griesser, 2007). The leaders, through inspirational motivation, fair interaction, and just decisions concerning the dissemination of institutional resources are dynamics in developing the employees' attitude and behavior (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). The concerned employees, in turn, are expected to show the utmost commitment and performance in achieving the leaders' vision related with norms and values of the institution (Tiara, & Putranto, 2015). Similarly, institutional decisions about fair treatment and provision of recognition, respect, promotion, rewards, and perks and privileges are vital parameters in shaping employees' behavior in institutions (Mauludin & Endang, 2018). So, fair distribution in institutional resources is playing a facilitating role in the relationship between the inspirational motivation and employees' performance.

To comprehend the desired standards, credibility, and success of organizations including higher education institutions, the decent performances, at different levels in the institutional hierarchy, are considered as the most significant phenomenon. Though, some dynamic factors are accountable for increasing or decreasing the level of performance in the institutions. Likewise, employees' positive justice perception is critical in shaping attitudes and behavior. Similarly, on the part of the institutional leader, inspirational motivation is vital for employees' best performance. In this regard, the results of the study provide significant evidence in making decisions. The inspirational motivation shows a significant association with employees' performance ( $R = .798$  &  $P\text{-value} = .000$ ) and significant impact ( $Beta = .450$  &  $P\text{ value} = .000$ ). However, the role of distributive justice is critical in facilitating the relationship between the inspirational motivation and the employees' performance thereby bringing variation in the results (change in  $R^2$  from 16% to 38%), change in Beta (from .450 to .082) and change in P-values (from .000 to .192). These variations confirmed that distributive justice fully mediates (full mediation) the relationship between employees' performance and inspirational motivation.

## **6.1 Recommendations**

- ✓ The performance is a significant predictor for various organizational outcomes; therefore, management and leadership of the institutions are required to put more emphasis on such parameters which are critical in augmenting the level of performances.
- ✓ Leadership behavior is the most effective phenomenon in inspiring employees towards better performances, therefore, leaders are required to be focused upon such measures which help in shaping the employees' behavior optimistically.
- ✓ The fairness at workplaces is considered as a significant predictor in improving employees' performance, therefore, the management of institutions is required to put their focus more on the equal distribution of institutional resources among employees.
- ✓ This study might be helpful for policymakers in gaining valuable information from the results of a study about research concepts and interrelationships. It might also help future scholars in obtaining practical guidelines about research design applied in the study.

## **6.2 Implications and limitations**

- ✓ The study provides significant information about the relationship among research variables in higher educational institutions wherein the stakeholders from this context are expected to get the suitable insights about leadership behavior, institutional fairness and employees outcomes.
- ✓ The fairness is vital phenomenon for the institutions in order to maintain the confidence and trust of the employees on leadership behavior and institutional actions. The leadership in the educational context is direly needed to comprehend the situation thereby ensuring the employees.
- ✓ The employees are the leading source for institutions where the desired outcomes can be obtained through effective motivation and inspiration. Therefore, the leadership role is more effective in ensuring the employees motivation and performance and institutional fairness in institutions.
- ✓ This study is limited to specific variables, specific context and specific methodology based on the nature of research study. This study is limited to the particular tools and techniques that are used to find the answers of research questions in order to reach the conclusion more systematically.

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## The Role of Emotional Intelligence & Employees Performance and Decision-Making Study Of Non-Governmental Organization Sukkur District

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### Abstract

This research aims to observe the relationship between EQ learning and decision-making. Therefore, a sample of more than 100 respondents came from employees working in non-governmental organizations, despite the complex hierarchical nature of the organization. But the main goal of the research is to measure the level of relationships between all variables. The results indicated that there is a highly significant and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and decision-making. Further in this study, the whole result was checked through SPSS 23 version and applied quantitative technology.

**Keywords:** *Emotional intelligence, decision-making, non-governmental organizations, empathy, self-awareness, Self-management, motivation Social Skills.*

### 1. Introduction

Certainly, Human resource management has played a vital role in every sector or in every company, and organization all policies are usually made by the senior authority and the most expert, skillful person. (Aligning with the mission 2004) Valuable asset of any company or organization who have faced any constraints in working condition, then with the stay connection of a knowledgeable person, management has resolved all issues and resistance which were occurring before employees toward any accomplishing goal. (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004) Very crucial step in EI is to give awareness, and consciousness to employees and take all appropriate decisions. (Berman & West, 2008) A person who is accustomed to multi-skills can convert all hurdles which were raised beyond any purpose.

These kinds of decisions make success to the organization around the competitive zone. (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004) Further it is prescribed that putting a portion of conscious connectivity may give information to all employees on how to cross all troubles and remain focused on situations. Ahmed (2002) defined that any employee which is possessed with a well command of techniques, and skills can lead an organization on the right track way. Must letting free to all employees in the involvement of decision opinions with management. There should be a such an environment where all employees work together in peace, if there is need of any policy or decision, which all ought be adopted. A person who is a well gripped on EI may make prominent and excellent to

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organization, obviously, the person who is appropriate in EI never take any wrong decision, better decisions must be taken.

Dividing all taskbars to every employee accordingly with the measurement of equivalency. If we will look in Pakistani NGOs or companies, they have neither considered to employees' thoughts nor make very encouraged in decision-making, every time management has adopted poor quality policies, poor management. EI has widely focused on awareness of how to tackle all problems, formulating policies in implementation format, in this way organization will be capable to be creative, and competitive. (Lowin, 1968) assessed that all employees must be free and involved in every step that the top priority of authority must give concentration upon their employees and let them free to share suggestions and review about the factors which are raising beyond the way of organizational achievement. As further he mentioned that if there is dire need of techniques like dimensions, facts and figures try to go with the support of all of their things as Authority as well as employees feel satisfactory in decision making. (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004) Conclusively prescribed as the EI and decision makings are the main key factor to bring the change in the organization. Participation in decision-making and the effectiveness of EQ and participation in decision-making is useful for administrators and researchers to open up more dimensions in EQ and participation in decision-making. As (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004) concluded, the combination of emotional intelligence and participation in decision-making is a key factor in changing organizational responses.

### **1.1 Research Question**

1. How does the leader's emotional intelligence have a significant impact on the performance, learning, and decision-making of employees in the NGO sector?
2. Will decision-making, based on emotional intelligence provide proper boost to explore and implement new trends and techniques in same genre?
3. Should emotional intelligence be prerequisite criterion of decision-making for the organizational leaders?

### **2. Literature Review**

Emotional intelligence contributes to overall performance in an organization, from leadership to overall organizational performance. In an outcome-only model, decision makers have complete control over their emotions and identify opportunities as they arise (Istianingsih, Masnun, & Pratiwi, 2020). Instead of being negative, rational thinking occurs when managers or decision makers know that all their decisions are evaluated and held accountable for the consequences of those actions. Conclusion (Istianingsih, Masnun, & Pratiwi, 2020).

Of course, associating yourself with the latest trends and technologies (such as modern connectivity) will be a big difference and factor. Of course, emotional information is an important part of the development of organizational structure, so it will be the ability to

manage effective decision-making, combined with all the latest trends, the technology applied in decision-making may be presented in a real way. Broadly there will not be the possibility to meet with the basic needs which are essential for the prosperity of an organization. It will be vividly clear that how the competition is at a peak level, each organization is trying to adopt the very latest routes to get more and more benefits. (Biswas & Rahman., 2017).

Certainly, the points of hurdles in the progress of the organization will be probably level, so it will be better clearly to have appropriateness of every acts, as there could be secureness of the organization. (Bhattacharjee, & Rahman, 2016). After the analysis of all tasks timely, it will be entirely better to take initiatives which all must be taken very immediately and urgently toward the progress and development.(Kumar & Jauhari, 2016) Emotional skills have become important in the organization, giving it a competitive advantage over competitors in a very dynamic environment focused on employee satisfaction.(Vrontis et al., 2021)

These are companies that have environmental information, mostly based on internal and external company information. Information provides important information to support managers' work in making day-to-day decisions or decisions for the company. Individuals can verify this information, but most companies follow these guidelines. But there is a difference between making good decisions and easy decisions. Open innovation through intelligent information systems is very useful in gathering and managing information (Grezes, Bonazzi, Cimmino, & Atman, 2020). This is because smart people know good or bad outcomes and work with history to avoid repeating it and are cautious when making decisions (Vaughan, Laborde, & McConville, 2019).

## **2.1 Historical Perspective Of Emotional Intelligence**

The word EI very first was summarized by mayor and slavery. The influence of leadership through emotions will be highly helpful to bring the change administration in a quick response.(Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Outcomes are assessed in a different way be the adoption of the learning stage to the enhancement of employee's performance, and understanding of mental capability according to the avail opportunities, the opportunities will be greatly in favor of the organization.(Lumpkin & Achen, 2018). The strategic policies must be made merely for the purpose of future achievement or desirable goals to meet basic learning steps and employee performance enhancement. The performance is only depending upon the employee's satisfaction...(Lumpkin & Achen, 2018) The bad instrument which does not leave to organization toward the map of triumph, the things and all accomplishments are not so easy to cope up in a short span of time.(Edelman &Knippenbert, 2018)

The concentration on basic points may become the so fruitful for the atmosphere of the organization, Version in the shape of genius always takes the organization to success, take every measurement, and initiates to tackle up competitors. (Edelman & Knippenbert, 2018). Outcome of quantitative observation researchers assessed as emotional intelligence has importance in organization as the pace of qualitative

leadership steps should be taken on a timely. Another way is to use the pattern of training phase because entirely organization will be liable to go through according to the strategies formulated policies to get a high very much benefit.(Edelman & Knippenbert, 2018). Training session has completely brought the greatest role to bring change in decision.(Lumpkin & Achen, 2018).

## **2.2 Research Variables' Definitions**

The priority in EI is prescribed by the mayor and slavery, and the model indicates the mixed model 1955, 1998. There must be extra effort and compromise in styling. The topic of emotional intelligence is now the biggest controversy, and the Gorman model emphasizes this point.

Emotional intelligence: With the use of EI decision-making, only the highest power base can be implemented. In addition, management will consider all employees every time to achieve targeted ideal goals.

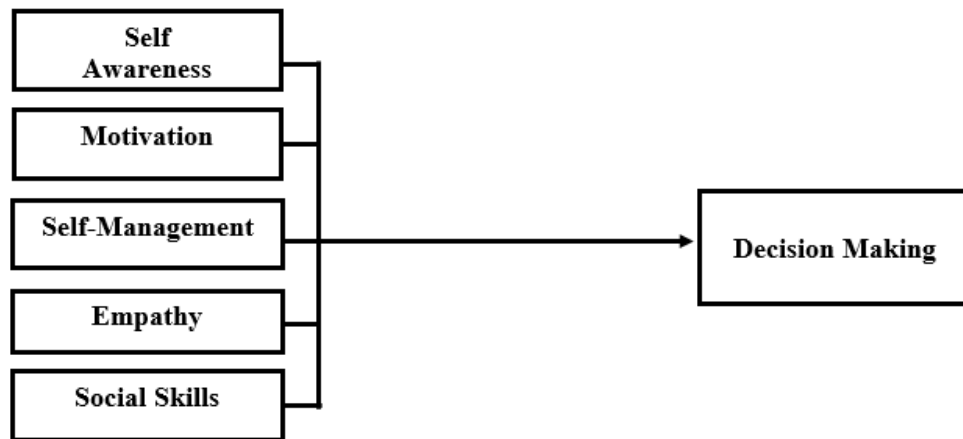
## **2.3 Emotional Intelligence Is Commonly Defined By Four Attributes:**

### **Research Model**

According to Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who helped to popularize emotional intelligence consists of abilities such as knowing one's own emotions, recognizing emotions in others, motivating oneself, and regulating emotions. Goleman divided the Emotional Intelligence Model into two groups. These are personal competence and social competence and there are five key elements to it:

- a) **Personal Competence:**
  - a. **Self-awareness:** means knowing one's own emotions and feelings; that is, emotional self-awareness. This self-awareness is made up of one's confidence in his/her own abilities and skills.
  - b. **Self-management:** is the ability to direct oneself to change by being open to new ideas and information, without ignoring what they know correctly, maintaining their honesty.
  - c. **Motivation:** refers to the strong desire to achieve and to go further by trying to accomplish his/her personal goals or institutional goals and not to miss opportunities.
- b) **Social Competence:**
  - d. **Empathy:** consists of abilities such as being able to put oneself in the shoes of others, to understand their needs, to help them in their difficult times, to be able to consciously guide the other without escaping from any responsibility.
  - e. **Social Skills:** include skills such as being able to listen to the other person by establishing open communication, establishing and managing communication in such a way as to serve the purpose, initiating change and

controlling conflicts, working with others and guiding them in line with the goals (Yan, 2008)



**Figure: I Emotional Intelligence**

## **2.4 Theories Of Emotional Intelligence**

### **2.4.1 Goleman Model**

(Goleman, 1998) EI has five components: self-awareness, self-control, Social Skills, empathy, and motivation. His focus is on how four factors control the operation of leadership. The method of self-reliability and self-evaluation is structured to understand her/his thoughts and intentions. Control allows a person to control his emotions, especially when these emotions become a problem; he can still adapt to this situation. Having good communication skills does mean making everyone aware of rest and encouraging them. The step of sympathy is a step out of the way of thinking of all of them. Goleman shared their opinion as standing on the level of proper rank, and developing prosperity is directly dependent upon the format of communication, sympathy, and encouragement.

#### **2.4.2. Bar On Model**

Another scholar (Bar-On, 2006) identifies a few terms on how to lead employees to very effective performance. Collectively the process of working effectively will be the measurement of interaction, self-reliability, self-awareness, and self-confidence. These points are basic to recognize the deficiencies and crossing beyond all resistance, and constraints which are not letting to the organization on the movement purpose of success. Bar-On models have been criticized for being mentally retarded, as they rely heavily on personality and performance (Grunes, Gudmundsson, & Irmer, 2013) (McCrae, 2000).

Bar-On model. The (Bar-On, 2006) Personal characteristics influence how well they understand and express themselves, inform and communicate with others, and manage daily tasks and needs. Bar-On skills and skills mentioned include interpersonal technique, which is totally providing a complete group of structured formats of success. Further Baron gave a such concept related to emotional quotient inventory, even this conceptual framework has been converted into a multiple languages approximately thirty languages, So people are widely using to it and getting many advantages in collection method of data (Bar-On, 2006) (Van Zyl & C , 2016).

#### **2.5. Decision-Making**

Cognitive theory states that learning and memory are developmental and begin with the gathering of information through the senses. The information, then, goes to the brain, where it is coded and analyzed and later consolidated in long-term memory. Afterward, this information can be retrieved and used. This progression requires that biological brain changes happen without the individual consciously having to take part in the process (Faw, 2003; Klein, 2015; Schlaghecken, Refaat, & Maylor, 2011). Decision-making is thought to begin before a person even consciously becomes aware of making the decision. The idea that one deliberates over the decision-making process is not legitimate because one's brain already knows the decision he or she is going to make before he or she does actually make that decision. Although this is an unconscious process that occurs automatically, ones consciousness can later come back and veto the automatic decision (Miller & Schwarz, 2014). Most professionals agree that at least some processes are unconscious, especially sensory and late motor activity, perception, cognition, and the action that follows. The decision to act comes into consciousness after being developed completely in unconsciousness.

#### **2.6. Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Self-awareness is positively concerned with decision making.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Self-management positively related with decision making.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Motivation is significantly related with decision making.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Empathy is significantly related with decision making.



**H<sub>5</sub>:** Social Skills positively related to decision-making.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Decision-making is highly correlated with Emotional Intelligence.

### 3. Research Methods

The study was conducted on the employees of a non-governmental organization. Data were collected through questionnaires. Twenty-five questions were about emotional intelligence that is self-awareness, self-management, motivation, empathy, and social skills and five were about Decision Making.

The questionnaire was used the Likert 5-point scale model used to collect research-related data from staff who perform duties in different departments of NGOs. Questionnaires exist in two ways. One part is related to the demographic information of the interviewee, and the other part is related to emotional intelligence data in learning and decision-making. Then the collected data was analyzed and sent through SPSS 23 statistical software. Correlation and regression were used to find out the effect of emotional intelligence on employees' learning and decision-making.

### 4. Discussion & Results:

**Table 4.1. Reliability Analysis**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	80.6
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	24	19.4
	Total	124	100.0

a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### 4.2. Regression Analysis

A measure of the relationship between the average value of a variable (such as output) and the corresponding values of other variables (such as time and cost)

**Table 4.2. Variables Entered Interpretation**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Social Skills, Self-management, Empathy, Motivation, Self-Awareness	.	Enter

**4.3. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.347a	.120	.73	.96257537

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Skills, Self-management, Empathy, Motivation, Self-Awareness

**4.4 Anova**

Analysis of variance is a collection of statistical models that are used to analyze the differences between group means and related procedures. It was developed by statistician and evolutionary biologist Ronald Fisher. Analysis of variance is a set of observations the variation in is divided into different statistical methods.

**Table 4.4. Anova<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.904	5	2.381	2.570	.032b
	Residual	87.096	94	.927		
	Total	99.000	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Decision Making

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Skills, Self-management, Empathy, Motivation, Self-Awareness

**Table 4.5. Coefficients**

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	-9.579E-17	.096		.000	1.000
	Self-Awareness	.117	.113	.117	1.037	.302
	Self-management	.086	.099	.086	.869	.387
	Motivation	.141	.113	.141	1.255	.213
	Empathy	-.228	.104	-.228	-2.202	.030
	Social Skills	-.086	.129	-.086	-.665	.508

a. Dependent Variable: Decision Making

Assume that self-awareness is positively related to learning and decision-making. However, the contribution of self-consciousness to the dependent variable is 0.117, but the significance is 0.302, indicating that there is a negative correlation between the

rejection hypotheses. In the hypothesis, self-management is positively related to learning and decision-making. However, the contribution of self-management to the dependent variable is 0.086, but the significance is 0.387, which means that the hypothesis here is rejected and there is a negative correlation with the dependent variable. In the hypothesis, motivation is significantly related to learning and decision-making. But the motivational contribution to the dependent variable is 0.141, but it is significant 0.030, which means that the hypothesis here is rejected and the correlation with the dependent variable is not significant. Empathy is closely related to learning and decision-making. But the contribution of empathy to the dependent variable is -.228, but the significance is 0.030, indicating that the hypothesis here is accepted and is positively correlated with the dependent variable. In my hypothesis, social skills are positively related to learning and decision-making, but the relationship management contribution of the dependent variable is -.086, which means there is a negative contribution, but it is significant 0.508, which means that the hypothesis here is accepted, and Dependent variable,

#### **4.6. Correlations**

Self-awareness has nothing to do with self-awareness, self-awareness and Self-management are irrelevant, the importance ratio is 0.068, self-awareness and motivation are irrelevant to 0.284, self-awareness and empathy have nothing to do with the significance ratio of 0.426, self-awareness and social skills The significance & significance ratio of is .000, and the significance & significance ratio of self-awareness and participation and decision-making is 0.044,

Self-management and Self-management are totally meaningful. Self-management is irrelevant, self-awareness and saliency ratio is 0.068, Self-management is irrelevant, motivation is irrelevant than .394, Self-management is irrelevant and empathy & significance ratio is 0.574 , The significance & significance ratio of Self-management and social skills is 0.155, and the significance & significance ratio of self-awareness and participation and decision-making is 0.149,

Motivation is completely meaningful, motivation is meaningless, self-awareness and saliency ratio is 0.284, motivation is meaningless, Self-management meaningless ratio is 0.394, motivation is meaningless, empathy and saliency ratio Yes. 112, the motivation is the significance of social skills and the ratio of significance is .000, the motivation is the significance of participation and decision-making and the ratio of significance is 0.371,

Empathy has nothing to do with empathy, empathy is irrelevant, self-awareness and importance ratio is 0.426, empathy is irrelevant to Self-management irrelevant ratio is .574, empathy is irrelevant, motivation is irrelevant ratio 0.112 , Empathy is very important, social skills and the significance ratio is 0.000, and the significance and significance ratio of empathy for participation and decision-making is 0.012,

Social skills and social skills are completely significant, social skills are significant, self-awareness and saliency ratio is 0.000, social skills are not significant, Self-management is significantly greater than 0.155, social skills are significant, motivation is significant than .000, Social Skills are significant, empathy and saliency ratio is .000, social skills are irrelevant, participation and decision-making and saliency ratio is 0.093,

Participation in decision-making and participation in decision-making is completely significant, participation in decision-making is irrelevant, self-awareness and significance ratio is 0.044, participation in decision-making is irrelevant, self-discipline is irrelevant ratio is 0.149, participation in decision-making and motivation is an irrelevant ratio of .371, participation in decision-making and social interaction Skills are not important, the ratio of insignificance is 0.012, participation in decision-making and participation is not important, the ratio of decision-making to importance is 0.093,

**Table 4.6. Correlations**

		Self-awareness	Self-manage	Motivation	Empathy	Social Skills	Decision Making
Self-awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.183	.108	-.080	-	.201*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.068	.284	.426	.000	.044
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Self-management	Pearson Correlation	.183	1	.086	-.057	-.143	.145
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068		.394	.574	.155	.149
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.108	.086	1	.160	.401**	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.284	.394		.112	.000	.371
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	-.080	-.057	.160	1	.350**	-.250*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.426	.574	.112		.000	.012
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Social Skills	Pearson Correlation	-	-.143	.401**	.350**	1	-.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.155	.000	.000		.093

	N	100	100	100	100	100	100
Decision Making	Pearson Correlation	.201*	.145	.091	-.250*	-.169	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.149	.371	.012	.093	
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.7. Hypothesis**

.NO	Hypotheses	Accepted	Rejected
1	Self-awareness is positively concerned with decision making		✓
2	Motivation is significantly related with decision making		✓
3	Self-management positively related with decision making.	✓	
4	Empathy is significantly related with decision making.	✓	
5	Social Skills positively related with decision making.		✓
6	Decision making is highly correlated with Emotional Intelligence	✓	

## 5. Conclusion

Emotional intelligence plays a big role in several aspects of our lives. It's vital to develop a relationship of quality that creates a awfully positive impact on all concerned. Having the ability to precise personal issues while not anger or passivity could be a key plus. Additionally, robust emotions facilitate NGOs leaders to form effective selections. Once the emotions aren't restricted during a positive approach it will cause unfortunate selections. Showing emotion intelligent managers build higher selections by victimization emotions to enhance judgments and see things clearly even once feelings square measure overwhelming. Leaders with emotional intelligence tend to realize their personal and structured goal additional effectively than leaders but not have that quality.

Every leader of a non-profit organization has a common goal, which is to improve decision-making standards, so the use of emotional intelligence skills will help achieve this goal. The World Health Organization, the leader of non-profit organizations, measures self-awareness, and may accurately and honestly assess their own advantages over others in the organization, and invest in the attributes of others in decision-making methods. The ability to assess potential emotional outcomes and responses {of

selections of selections of selection} will enable non-profit leaders/decision makers to predict the emotions of those affected by the decision, thereby increasing the chances of obtaining additional positive call results. The method of establishing and maintaining relationships is humane in nature, requiring an emotional perspective, and time is tight, which can produce higher call results. In addition, choice-value creation often creates conflicts, so the ability to manage this conflict involves emotional intelligence talents that can verify the ultimate success of the decision-making method. Using AN EQ lists will not only enhance the outcome of the selection, but it will also enhance the decision-making processes in non-profit organizations. Finally, ensure additional analysis to clarify the impact of EQ-related behaviors on the results achieved in the non-profit environment.

## **6. Recommendation**

Given the unique mission and goals of non-profit entities, it is clear that non-profit leaders need a unique set of talents. Although the literature provides some background on this situation, it provides additional analysis of the use of emotional intelligence in a nonprofit leadership environment. The precise analytical queries that will provide additional insight are:

1. Emotional intelligence counseling should go to workers to strengthen their emotional intelligence.
2. Emotional intelligence has not received enough attention in Pakistani culture. This research may be a small impetus to change the general mentality of indifference to emotional intelligence.
3. Are there performance differences among non-profit CEOs related to the use of emotional intelligence? In other words, the higher levels of emotional intelligence that the CEOs of the World Health Organization's non-profit organizations seem to have added to their work assignments? Intuitively, people would expect this premise to be correct, but concrete evidence is needed to support this view.
4. Measure the non-profit environment, compared with their for-profit analogs, is it conducive to the pool of EQ talents?
5. Leaders of for-profit World Health Organizations show higher levels of emotional intelligence, and may they achieve professional success even after transitioning to non-profit organizations?
6. Once thinking about using EQ skills in a non-profit setting, are institutional settings or individual talents more important in determining success?
7. Don-of-it leader The World Health Organization uses EQ talents to pool their expertise to a higher selection rate than others in the organization believe.

## **7. Limitations**

For researchers, it is difficult to use the data of all NGOs in the Sukkur area. Therefore, due to the limited resources of scholars and even short time, the research is restricted. However, the research is limited to:

- Employees of NGOs.

**Author Contributions:** All authors have contributed equally

**Data Availability Statement:** Data will be shared if requested by the academic/researcher from a relevant field of background at the granting institution. The researchers contacted through the official account or sent an email.

**Conflict of Interest:** There is no conflict of interest.

**Funding Information:** There is no funding/ Not Applicable

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## Factors Affecting Online Food Delivery Application on Continuous Intention During Covid-19: A Case Study of Food Panda

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the factors affecting online food delivery applications on the continuous intention during COVID-19. For this research, the sample size of 200 respondents was taken by using a convenient sampling strategy. The questionnaire was adopted from previous studies and it was consisting of a 5-likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The data was gathered on three independent variables and one dependent variable continuous intention during covid-19. Two techniques were used reliability analysis and multiple regression analysis in SmartPLS version 3. The result of SEM showed that there is a significant impact of habit, price, and social influence on the continuous intention during COVID-19. The findings of this study can be said an empirical support to top management of food pandas and concerned managers who are managing this food application in context of Hyderabad, Pakistan. Due to COVID-19 online to offline become an important in order to survive in this situation where the physical stores are closed for the end customers.

**Keywords:** *Continuous Intention, Habit, Price Value, Social Influence, COVID-19*

### 1. Introduction

Today's competitive environment has developed a new form of business which lead to online to offline (O2O) and developed new challenges for doing business in a new way as compared to traditional (Liu et al., 2017; Cho et al., (2019). Most of time the customer used to prefer offline or non-physical stores for buying goods and services for number of reasons including COVID-19. In the mobile applications play a vital role for connecting the buyers with suppliers through smartphone applications (Lyu & Hwang, 2015; Kim et al., 2019). O2O has emerged in service oriented such as hotels, food services, car rentals and real estate so on. This how people are now habitual and getting benefits from these mobile apps (Lee et al., 2017). It has been practically observed that the competition in the food industry is also increased (Lee et al., 2017). Therefore, it need to find out the key factors which may influence the customer continuous intention to use e-commerce in the context of a small-scale restaurant (Jeon et al., 2017).

Online to offline represents a forum for consumers to buy online or from physical stores a wide variety of goods or services. This money-making approach integrates market opportunities offline with Web or market system and renders the Web a fully incorporated, robust, and highly developed e-commerce site (Chan et al., 2008).

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Managers and markets have tried to exploit the O2O business style to drag more Web clients to their apparent offline stores by furnishing improved shopping openings easily, easy to understand the structure, and a wide assortment of goods and services (Hubert et al., 2017). Continuous intention to use mobile applications is directly linked with the perceived value of a customer. Whilst using online food delivery application customer always look for ways through which they can decrease the price (Wang, et al., 2019). People get influenced by their surrounding and they use an application on a continuous basis which then become their habit. A study conducted by Venkatesh et al., (2007), which resulted in that usage of mobile commerce applications are influenced by the social influence. Social influence makes people use the online food delivery application because the watch others how they get their food delivered at their doorstep so, it affects them and they got influence by their surrounding.

## **2. Literature review and hypothesis development**

### **2.1 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)**

The technology acceptance model is taken from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and many past studies are concluded based on this acceptance of technology (Pavlou, 2003). Especially, in regard of mobile commerce and e-commerce (López-Nicolás et al., 2008; Ha & Stoel, 2009). Individuals have now developed a perception that the new advanced technology can make their life easier and the intention to use of these technology is practically observed (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Alalwan et al., 2018). One of the factors social influences in context of new technology use is enforced to looking close people in circle (Venkatesh et al., 2012). People tend to follow their peers in order to use of new technology (Bagozzi, & Lee, 2002). The social influence is found positive impact on the intention to use of technology in context of new goods and services (Venkatesh et al., 2003). However, this model has certain limitations particularly the psychological factors or cognitive factors are not taken into consideration. In order to make this model more specific and stronger a study was conducted by (Venkatech et al., 2012). In this improved model they introduced a key factor such as price value and habit so on. In context of mobile application, the price value can be defined as “the perceived benefits of using an app versus the monetary costs incurred using the app” (Dodds et al., 1991). When a customer feels that the benefits of new technology more than cost at this point, they prefer to use a newly introduced technology. Another an important factor is Habit may come from learning but sometimes the environmental external factors may suggest to develop that habit (Hsu et al., 2015). Therefore, the habit cannot be ignored for the technology acceptance model.

### **2.2 Causality Orientation Theory (COT)**

Causality orientation Theory also supports the conceptual model of this study for a number of reasons. COT is the mini theory of self-determination theory which is considered as a macro concept with many sub-theories (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Causality orientation theory is based on three important components including psychological process, controlled orientation, and autonomy orientation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). Psychological or human behavior can be defined as the individual may act as per current

emerging situations such as COVID-19 and they can regulate their behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010; Gilal et al., 2020). Furthermore, the individual may behave according to external or internal demands that he or she faces at the current situation. This situation or factor can be said the “controlled orientation” (Gilal et al., 2018). Therefore, this theory also supports to factors of this study such as social influence, price value and habit.

### **2.3 Hypothesis Development**

#### ***Social Influence***

The social influence cannot be ignored in context of using smartphone for using e-commerce applications in today’s competitive business environment. A study conducted by Venkatesh et al., (2003), suggested the idea of social influence “the extent to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should apply the new system”. In the mobile food order applications such as food panda is new concept for customers of Hyderabad and it is practically observed most of them influenced by surrounded people in form of family members, friends, and colleagues so on. The opinion of these individuals is considered an important for making decision in regard of marketing (Okumus et al., 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2017). It is also true that the most of people want to get social approval in this new information system and they make the decision accordingly (Verkijika, 2018; Khalilzadeh et al., 2017). There are many empirical studies have been conducted in context of mobile ecommerce. A recent study conducted by Verkijika (2018), confirmed the role of social influence as positive predictor of customer’s intention to use e-commerce mobile applications. Similarly, to this study another study carried by Khalilzadeh et al., (2017), also confirmed the same results as a positive and significant impact of social influence for intention to use of mobile. Lastly, Okumus et al., (2018), social influence is found to have positive and significant impact on intention to use mobile application in USA’ customers as well. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

**H1:** Social Influence positively related to continuous intention to use mobile application during COVID-19.

#### ***Price Value***

The price value is taken into consideration by the customers as the financial feature, especially the newly developed goods and services (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In past many studies also revealed their findings that the customers most of time compare the prices for newly introduced goods and services as the financial cost for using it as the first-time buyer (Venkatesh et al., 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2017). Most of the customers also take the ordering food cost while using the mobile food ordering application with respect to the old way of buying goods and services. Therefore, the price value to be considered as the key factor for the continued intention to use and e-satisfaction. A recent Dwivedi et al., (2017) in regard of mobile banking showed a positive relation between price value and intention to use. Lastly, a study conducted on Canadian customer’s also revealed the role of price value for the intention to use mobile e-commerce. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed.

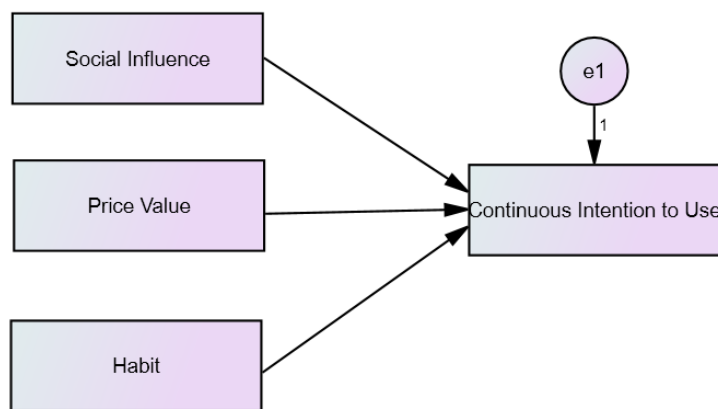
**H2:** Price value positively related to continuous intention to use mobile application during COVID-19.

**Habit**

According to a study by Limayem et al., (2007), habit is can be developed as a customer repeating the same behavior and a learning experience is also observed during this course to time. Now day’s people are more involved in use of smartphones and they also associated themselves with smartphones. A study by Ajzen and Fishbein (2005), the result of learning experience will be converted into habitual behavior. Therefore, an individual may develop attitude that will be turned into behavior in form of continued intention to use mobile phone. In past studies the role of habit has been studied in context of mobile e-commerce and adoption of use of the mobile phone (Sun & Chi, 2018; Rana et al., 2017; Amorso & Lim, 2017). A recent study by Morosan and DeFranco, (2016), confirmed that the habit is positive impact on customer’s intention to use mobile in hotel sector. Similarly, in Jordan habit is also found to have positive role for using the mobile banking application (Alalwan et al., 2018). Lastly, Venkatesh et al., (2012) also revealed a positive habitual behavior for towards mobile food applications in order to use in the future. Therefore, in the light of this review following hypotheses is recommended.

**H3:** Habit positively related to continuous intention to use the mobile application during COVID-19.

Based on above theoretical framework and literature review following the conceptual model of this study is proposed. See the figure 1:



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

### **3. MATERIAL & METHODS**

#### **3.1 Procedure, sampling strategy and Sample size**

Primary data means that the data has been collected for the first time and here the data is collected through an online Google form from the respondents and the structural adopted questionnaire is used which is based on an online food panda delivery application that effects on the continuous intention during COVID-19. The population of this research is customers from different age's group from Hyderabad Pakistan who are using online applications while using the food panda mobile application. Convenience sampling has been used and it is usually one type of non-probability technique and it examine as an attainability and contiguous for the respondents. There is a way which is used to determine the sample size and the method is 10:1 (10 samples for one item). A rule of thumb proposed by Roscoe (1975) that if you are using quantitative research and performing multiple regression analysis so, you must have adopted the criteria as (Number of items \* 10). In our research, we used 16 items so,  $16*10=160$ . In order to get accuracy in our results we collected 200 responses.

#### **3.2 Measurement:**

All factors including the dependent variable (continuous intention to use) and independent variables (social influence, price, and habit) research items are adopted from previous studies. Adopted questionnaire based on five Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-5 scaling). The continuous intention to use four items are taken from the study of Lee et al., (2019) and one item from the study of Cho et al., (2018). Research items are "I intend to continue using food delivery apps during COVID-19, I will always try to use food delivery apps in my daily life during COVID-19, I plan to continue to use food delivery apps frequently during COVID-19 I intend to keep ordering food through the delivery app during COVID-19 and I have decided to use food delivery apps for purchasing foods the next time during COVID-19".

Social influence is also taken from the study of Lee et al., (2019). Items are "People who are important to me think that I should use food delivery apps for purchasing foods during COVID-19, People who influence my behavior think that I should use food delivery apps for purchasing food during COVID-19 and People whose opinions I value prefer that I use food delivery apps for purchasing food during COVID-19".

Price value is three items are adopted from the research of Cho et al., (2018) and one item from the study of Lee et al., (2019). Research Items are "When I order food through the delivery app, the food is a good product for the price during COVID-19, When I order food through the delivery app, the food is economical during COVID-19, When I order food through the delivery app, the food is reasonably priced during COVID-19 and I can save money by using food delivery apps for purchasing foods by comparing the prices offered at different online stores during COVID-19".

Lastly, the Habit Lee et al., (2019). Research items are taken are "Purchasing foods through food delivery apps is almost like a habit for me during COVID-19, I am addicted to using food delivery apps for the purchase of foods during COVID-19, I must

use food delivery apps for purchasing foods during COVID-19 and Using food delivery apps for purchasing foods has become natural to me during COVID-19”.

#### 4. Results and discussion

##### 4.1 Demographic of Respondents

The Table 1 below shows the number of respondents which are further categorized as Gender, Age of Respondent, their Frequency to buy online, their expenditure on online purchase and their education. In this research, we collected data through online portal and there were 200 respondents who participated willingly and those were the food panda delivery application users. As shown below that out of 200, 131 were male respondents and 69 were female. Participants were from different age groups like, 27.5% were from 15-20 years’ age group, 33.5% from 21-25 age group and rest of the respondents were from 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 age groups. Respondents were asked about their expenditure of food through the delivery application so, the greater expenditure percentage was 57% which means people expenditure is 5000-10000 and lowest were 11.5% means Above 20000 expenditures and lastly, we asked regarding their education background so, most percentage respondents were from post-graduation background means 29% and lowest percentage of respondents were from Intermediate background which means 19%.

**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	131	65.5
Female	69	34.5
Total	200	100.0
<b>Age of Respondent</b>		
15-20	55	27.5
21-25	67	33.5
26-30	50	25
31-35	19	9.5
36-40	09	4.5
Total	200	100.0
<b>Frequency to buy online</b>		
1-2 Times	66	33
3-4 Times	52	26
5-6 Times	35	17.5
Above 7 Times	47	23.5
Total	200	100.0
<b>Expenditure on online purchase</b>		
5000-10000	114	57
10000-15000	38	19
15000-20000	25	12.5
Above 20000	23	11.5
Total	200	100.0

Education		
Intermediate	38	19
Graduation	56	28
Under Graduation	48	24
Post-Graduation	58	29
Total	200	100.0

### 4.2 Reliability Analysis

As you can see in above Table 2 the reliability statistics, the Cronbach’s alpha value tells us about the decisions for the data on which we have performed the reliability test. We can judge the reliability in terms of if it is 60 means good and if it is above 70 then it will be classified as excellent so, as the Cronbach’s Alpha, the composite reliability of all the variables is above 70 so, it will be classified as Excellent and the variables are judged individually for their total number of items. Lastly, the average variance extracted is also greater than the suggested value .50. The results show that the data is reliable.

**Table 2. Reliability and Validity of Variables**

Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	No of Items	Composite Reliability	Average variance Extract
Habit (IV)	0.905	4	0.934	0.779
Price Value (IV)	0.760	4	0.847	0.581
Social Influence (IV)	0.841	3	0.904	0.759
Continuous Intention during covid-19 (DV)	0.883	5	0.915	0.682

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

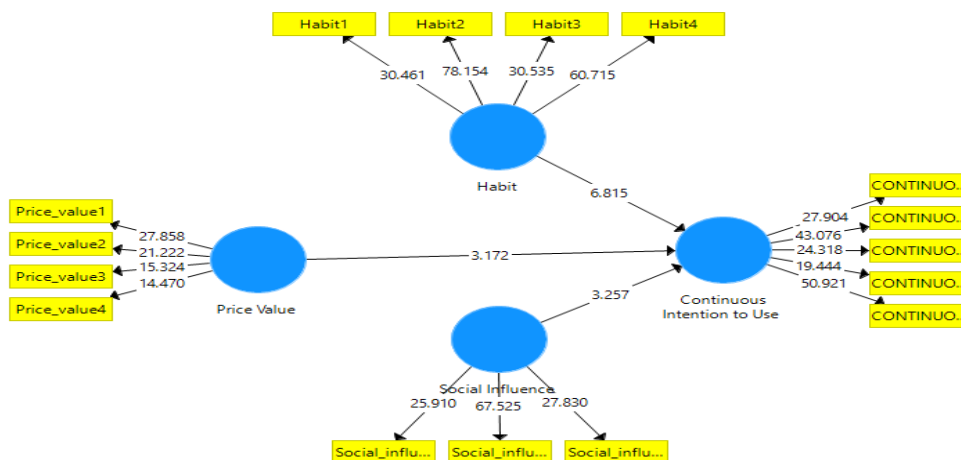
In this study partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique is used in order to test the proposed hypothesis (H1, H2 and H3). This technique is conducted with help of Smart PLS 3.20 software as suggested by Hair et al., (2019) for multiple regression analysis.

The coefficient Table 3 shows the values of beta and p-value so, the value of beta indicates the relationship between the dependent variables and independent variables and the p-values tell us about the level of significance. As the above table shows that all the independent variables like Habit (H), Price value (PV), and social influence (SI) have a positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable which is continuous intention during covid-19. There is a third column in the table which shows the value of the T-value is greater than 1.75 so, it shows that the model has a significant impact of all independent variables (Habit, Price value and Social Influence) on a dependent variable (Continuous Intention).

**Table 3. Coefficient**

Independent variables	Standardized Coefficients	T-value	P-value
	Beta		
Habit	.531	6.815	.000
Price Value	.208	3.172	.002
Social Influence	.213	3.257	.001

**Dependent Variable:** Continuous Intention



**Figure 2. Structural Equation Model (SEM)**

#### 4.4 Discussion on Results

##### *Habit*

In first hypothesis, the researcher reached to the point that the result of the regression analysis show that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted having P-value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and beta value is (0.531). The both values indicate that habit has a significant and positive impact on continuous intention in online food delivery application. All findings suggest that price value has a substantial and optimistic effect on the continuous intention to apply for online food delivery. Hence, it is possible to describe habit as something done on an ongoing basis, which then becomes a habit. Further, Habit can be defined as something done on a continuous basis that then becomes a habit. Habit becomes when a person got affected by the current situation, surrounding or the past experiences Ajazen and Fishbein (2005). Like, if a person uses food delivery applications on a continuous basis so, it means he/she has a habit of getting the food delivered at his/her doorstep so, this means that habit has a significant impact on continuous intention. Vanteshk at al., (2007) claim that the consequences of these accumulated learning experiences and their repeated habit formation can have an impact on consumer perceptions and beliefs, which also predict customers' continued intention to behave in the same way as everyone else.



### **Price value**

The regression analysis shows that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted having P-value = 0.002 which is less than 0.05 and beta value is (.208). The both values indicate that price value has a significant and positive impact on continuous intention in online food delivery applications. All values indicate that price value has an important and optimistic effect on the continuous intention to apply for online food delivery. Price value plays an important role and it really impact the continuous intentions because the product's value is derived by the customers and customers want to get the product in lowest possible price so, price values derived by the customer's decision because they check upon the worth of the product they are getting. Customer always looks for their benefits which derive price value (Shih et al., 2013).

### **Social Influence**

In third hypothesis, the researcher reached to the point that the result of the regression analysis show that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted having P-value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and beta value is (.213). The both values indicate that social influence has a significant and positive impact on continuous intention in online food delivery application. All results represent that price value has a major and positive impact on the continuous intention to apply for online food delivery. Equally important, it is possible to describe social influence as the way people behave the way others do. Social influence can be defined as the way people react the way others do. Social influence is that what others are doing in our surrounding and we see them and try to use those ways for our benefit like, if someone use the food delivery application regularly, they will share it with others so, it affects other people and they really adopt the same way in which they can also get their food on their doorstep (Mun et al, 2006). Social influence encourages more people to use the online food delivery application and they watch others how their food is delivered at their doorstep, because it influences them and they influence their environment. Social influence has a great impact on continuous intention.

## **5. Concluding Remarks and Implications**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The main purpose for this study was to determine the factors that affect online food delivery applications on continuous intention a case study of food panda Hyderabad. Establish on the analysis of this research and the reason of the research is to check which are the factors that affect the online delivery application on continuous intention. The findings of this research analysis audibly acknowledge that all independent variables are positively corresponded and possess a significant impact on continuous intention. The P-value instructs us about the level of significance and all the independent variables like Habit (H), Price value (PV) and social influence (SI) has a positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable that is continuous intention during covid-19. Lastly it is concluded that all independent variables of online food delivery applications have a great impact on continuous intention during covid-19.

## **5.2 Practical Implications**

The findings of this study can be said an empirical support to top management of food panda and concerned managers who are managing this food application in context of Hyderabad, Pakistan. Due to COVID-19 online to offline become an important in order to survive in this situation where the physical stores are closed for the end customers. This study identified key factors including social influence, price value and habit for continuous intention to use mobile applications as food pandas for ordering the food just like away.

Social Influences can play a vital role in this regard because people tend to discuss each-others as word of mouth. This is considered an important in the field of marketing for service-oriented firms such as food panda. The price value should be taken into consideration because extra fees may lead to dissatisfaction among customers and may they avoid using the food panda mobile application in this regard. In this regard, fees should be visible to customers and no hidden charges to be taken from them. Lastly, the habit to use of newly introduced technology also cannot be ignored to some extent. It becomes a challenging job for online food delivery businesses such as food panda to change the habit of food orders of individuals from traditional to online.

## **5.3 Future Research Directions**

There are a few contributions to this study with certain limitations, which can be an opportunity for the future researchers. This study was limited to only on firm food panda and Hyderabad, Pakistan. In the future more firms can be taken as a sample and geographical expansion can be done in other developing countries. Second, due to COVID-19, it was difficult to gather data physically from respondents a google form chosen by us and this limited to us in the context of sample size. Lastly, the mediation effect of age and gender can be checked in order to valid the existing results.

### **Author Contributions:**

All authors have contributed equally.

### **Data Availability Statement:**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the firstauthor.

### **Conflict of Interest:**

The authors have declared no conflicts of interest.

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## Customer Intention Towards Reverse Logistics of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) Bottles in the Beverage Industry of Pakistan

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### Abstract

This research aims to examine the Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottle exchange attitude and intention with the help of value belief norm theory in Karachi Pakistan. The main focus of the study is to report the empirical relationship among the antecedents of customer attitude and intention. This study follows the cross-sectional research design to conduct a survey based on a self-administered questionnaire. Using cluster sampling followed by a convenient sampling technique, responses were collected from 400 respondents of district east in Karachi. The findings reported that the value belief norm theory is successful in explaining the customer attitude regarding PET bottle exchange. This theory proves that PET bottles exchange attitudes in individuals developed only when certain values, beliefs, and personal norms are present. Further, the PET bottle exchange attitude explained significant variance for predicting customer PET bottle exchange intention. Moreover, the relationship between PET bottle exchange attitude and intention is moderated by consumer knowledge and the neutralization technique. The study demonstrates the need for policymakers and supply chain managers to actively advocate environmental messages in their promotional campaigns to offset the effect of customer neutralization and enhance customer knowledge regarding environmentally friendly behavior.

*Keywords: Value Belief Norm, PET bottle exchange, Attitude, Intention, Neutralization, Consumer Knowledge, Ecological Friendly*

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### 1. Introduction

The balance between economic performance and environmental management is the biggest challenge for organizations worldwide. Maximization of profit and expansion in business is the dream of the companies that leads to economic performance. However, economic growth has a substantial burden on the natural environment. Economic and business activities substantially degrade the environment through extensive use of energy, resources, and product consumption (Cowan et al., 2010; Orhan et al., 2021). Trade and commerce contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions through products and services offered. An extensive waste product in the environment causes severe damage to humans and wildlife. Moreover, this practice leads to excessive use and wastage of natural resources. To address this issue, James R stock first used the term “reverse logistics” in a white paper publication named “Reverse Logistics” published in the Council of Logistics Management in 1992. Reverse

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Logistics Association (2020) defines reverse logistics as the “collection of products, services, and operations after the sale point, the ultimate goal of optimizing or making the aftermarket activity more efficient, thereby saving money and protecting environmental resources”. The role of customers is essential in the reverse logistics of products as products lies at the disposal of customers’ intention.

To achieve sustainable dimensions, companies across the world have redesigned their supply chains more toward reverse logistics. In this regard, multinational companies like Hewlett & Pecker, Kodak, Xerox, and General Motors have reshaped their recovery processes by incorporating reverse logistics. Similarly, the US-based carpet industry has recently changed its processes towards reverse logistics to minimize the significant loss of valuable material and volume (Sas et al., 2015). The concept of reverse logistics, due to its global attention has increased the reuse, remanufacturing, and recycling of maximum materials. The United States organizations and their delegates appreciate Pakistan’s sustainable initiatives (Asees Awan & Ali, 2019). Similar to developed nations, some of the major companies like Tetra Pak and Engro have already incorporated reverse logistics in their operations to attain sustainability dimensions. In Pakistan, the majority of reverse logistics activities are the recycling and reuse of raw materials and end-of-life products (Asees Awan & Ali, 2019). The introduction of reverse logistics activities only in the auto industry of Pakistan can yield a 30 % increase in profits, a 22% reduction in cost, and a 19 % in environmental issues (Agyemang et al., 2019). The majority of production activities are conducted in Karachi, Pakistan and if Pakistan successfully incorporates these reverse logistics activities in other industries like the textile, pharmaceutical, and beverage industries, it will provide substantial economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Literature indicated that reverse logistics was considered cost centered by companies globally as compared to profit-centered (Bouzon et al., 2018; Govindan & Gholizadeh, 2021; Grosse-Ruyken & Wagner, 2010). Despite this, companies today have altered their company strategies and policies towards a more strategic focus on the reverse logistics perspective to reduce cost and enhance sustainability (Govindan & Gholizadeh, 2021; Janse et al., 2010). Reverse logistics gained ever-increasing consideration from practitioners and academics due to its immense critical role in environmental sustainability (Abdulrahman et al., 2014; Beiler et al., 2020). Through reverse logistics, firms try to get consumer satisfaction and competitive advantage. So far greater part of recent research spotlighted only from the perspective of the supplier or the operational end, aiming to control supply chain activities more effectively (Ritchie et al., 2000).

To gratify end-user demands for exchange, demand management is considered an important key strategy by companies to upgrade reverse logistics. For building long-term relationships with customers, researchers point out new ways of organizing the supply chain. The supply chain aims to construct confidence, share awareness regarding consumer desires, and decrease supplier support to realize management resources (Berry et al., 1994). Regardless of its significance, a lack of concentration has been paid

to encourage the consumer to adopt reverse exchange practices. The purpose of this study is to scrutinize the features that influence customers' behavioral intention to involve in reverse exchange practices with the help of VBN theory.

Therefore, this research has examined the core trends of the value Believe Norm (VBN) theory to enlighten buyer decisions while engaging in product exchange. Moreover, the moderating role of consumer knowledge and neutralization between attitude and intention was also investigated. The rest of the paper is arranged as follows: Section two of the paper discusses the relevant literature on reverse logistics, value belief norm theory, neutralization techniques, and consumer knowledge. Section three discussed the research methodology in brief. Section four discusses the data analysis and interpretation. In the last section, the discussion conclusion, and policy implications along with limitations and future recommendations have been discussed.

## **2. Theoretical Underpinning and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1 Value-Belief Norm Theory**

Individual's pro-environmental behavior has been explained by the Value Belief Norm theory which was developed by Stern and colleagues (Stern et al., 1999). The VBN theory is an extension of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior and the theory of reasoned action. This theory explains the individual's perceptions of ethical obligations and explains the logical process of individual traits and belief formation (i.e personal values) and the belief regarding the relationship between humans and the environment. Value theory, Norm activation model, and new environmental paradigm (NEP) originate from the VBN theory. The detailed hierarchal analysis of this theory reveals that values are classified as biospheric, social or altruistic, and egocentric or selfish (Gkargkavouzi et al., 2019). These clusters of values affect the formation of the belief that individuals possessed regarding the environment and their relationship with the environment.

Perceived Green Value, in ecological psychology, frequently explains the customer's ecological requirements sustainable expectations, and green perceptions (Chen & Chang, 2012). PGV is defined by observing the individual's purchase and utilization behavior. The researcher has discussed the PGV construct with four proposed values that influence the product exchange behavior of individuals: economic, ecological, symbolic, and experiential. The above-mentioned categorization is based on the literature and used to assess the perceived cost in addition to the benefits of consumer's product exchange behavior (Orth & De Marchi, 2007). Individuals with ecological principles use to employ product exchange for the sake of saving potential energy, improving resources efficiency, and protecting the environment while people with economic values engage in such decisions based on individual financial growth and reserves (Ghazali et al., 2019; Koller et al., 2011). On the other hand individuals with symbolic values engage in product exchange whether this activity will demonstrate their environmentally concerned self-image to other individuals (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). Recently, Punzo et al., (2019) by comparing the pro-environmental behavior of four developed countries also found that ecological, economic, and functional values are strong predictors of pro-environmental behavior. Lastly, persons owing experiential



values made decisions about product exchange for the sake of positive feelings like cheerfulness, satisfaction and gratification and it is closely linked with customer motivation (Orth & De Marchi, 2007). Similarly, Chang et al.,(2020) found significant association between food consumption and experiential values. Therefore, we hypothesize that;

**H1** Individuals having a higher perceived green value (PGV) have a higher awareness of environmental consequences (AC).

Previous literature also revealed that these values are successful to predict individuals' pro-environmental behavior (Sánchez et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Similarly, deep analysis of these general beliefs leads individuals towards awareness of the consequences of their behavior regarding the environment. The awareness of consequence (AC) entails that an individual's actions may boost the consequences. In the end ascription of responsibility (AR) is the feeling of one's moral obligation towards their environment which ultimately yields the generation of personal norms. Personal norms (PN) are the most influential factors because all the other variables in this theory may have an indirect influence through this variable and most of the time a direct effect on the norms (Nordlund & Garvill, 2002; Stern et al., 1999). Le et al., (2021) conducted a study to evaluate agrotourism in Vietnam and found that AC, AR, and PN are successful predictors of tourists' intentions.

Values can be described as the attractive transitional objective of variable significance that gives out as a leading principle in an individual's existence or other social body (Ture & Ganesh, 2014). Schwarz and Bilsky (1987) and Schwarz (1992) defined Values as (1) ideas or beliefs (2) relating to desirable end states or behaviors, (3) transcending particular circumstances (4) guiding the selection or assessment of behaviors and occurrences, and (5) are ordered by relative significance. In other words, behavior is guided by abstract goals defined by our value structure. Research has identified correlations between Schwartz' (1992) value categories and motivational value types with pro-environmental behavior and intentions. The value categories highly correlated with environmental concerns, attitudes, and behavioral intentions included self-transcendence (positive) and self-enhancement (negative) (De Groot & Steg, 2007; Karp, 1996; Oskamp & Schultz, 2005). Based on the discussion we formulated the following hypotheses;

**H2** People having a higher awareness of environmental consequences (AC) have a high ascription of responsibility (AR)

**H3** People with a higher ascription of responsibility (AR) have strong personal norms (PN) to engage in PET bottle exchange.

**H4** Individuals having strong personal norms (PN) have a more positive attitude towards PET bottle exchange.

Attitude and behavior can be the stronger predictors of customer intention (Wicker, 1969). Attitude is defined as the set of beliefs regarding the object that direct the public to behave in a definite way towards the thing and the intention is the person's promptness to execute a certain behavior and it is considered the straight predecessor of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Earlier research explains that behavioral intentions are affected by consumer beliefs, attitudes, or verdicts concerning the favorability of actions (Ajzen, 1991; Kautish & Sharma, 2019; Yousafzai et al., 2010). Many researchers explain that constructive attitudes affect ecologically sound conduct (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Levitt et al., 2019). Hence, by defining and explaining the VBN theory elements regarding pro-environmental behavior research hypothesized as:

**H5** Presence of a positive attitude towards PET bottle exchange leads to a greater intention to engage in PET bottle exchange.

## **2.2 Neutralization Theory**

It is evident that despite learning moral importance, attitude, or values that are completely prevailing in society; delinquents prefer to learn arguments to justify their acts. These justified arguments are called neutralization techniques (Brunner, 2014). The delinquents use these techniques to isolate themselves from self-embracing situations and others' blames. Society's values and norms accommodate these persons. These persons are accepted by society somewhat more flexibly and the nature of flexibility depends on time, place, individual, and social settings. From its incorporation, neutralization theory has gotten considerable attention from researchers in the field of sociology and especially for deviance/delinquency (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Minor, 1981). This theory had been discussed in most cases which include: crimes and delinquency (Teevan & Dryburgh, 2000), aggression, and violence (Huffman et al., 2001). Deviance at the workplace (Gauthier, 2001), cheating by (Hendershott et al., 2002), behavior regarding environmental harm by Robinson and Kraatz, (1998), organizational behavior by McCormick and Zampa, (1990), and deviation from occupations by Thompson and Harald, (1992).

Neutralization theory has got limited attention in the context of consumer behavior (Chatzidakis et al., 2006; Fukukawa et al., 2019; Sharma, 2020; Zhou et al., 2022). Whenever this theory has been used, it was evident that it is used only to explain the consumer's behavior such as shoplifting (Strutton et al., 1994) and piracy of music and software (Harris & Dumas, 2009), student cyberslacking behavior (Sharma, 2020) and deviants from internet platforms (Zhou et al., 2022). Besides this, it was also used to justify unethical behavior (Mitchell & Ka Lun Chan, 2002; Rosenbaum et al., 2011). This research adopted Brunner's (2014) definition and classification of five neutralization techniques used in the correspondingly associated perspective of moral utilization i.e. denial of responsibility, denial of benefit, denial of need, accusation, and personal principles. Hence, the researcher hypothesized neutralization as a moderator between attitude and intention:

**H6** There exists a weaker relationship between PET bottle exchange attitude and intention if the consumer neutralizes to a higher extent.

### **2.3 Consumer Knowledge**

Consumer knowledge is considered a very important variable in understanding consumer behavior such as information search (Brucks, 1985; Faize & Akhtar, 2020; Maurer & Bogner, 2020; Rao & Sieben, 1992), and information processing (Alba Joseph & Hutchinson Wesley, 1987; Bettman & Park, 1980). Two basic knowledge constructs have been eminent (Brucks, 1985; Park & Lessig, 1981). The first one is known as objective knowledge. This knowledge is exactly the product class that is stored in long-term memory. The other one is subjective knowledge or self-assessed knowledge and it is the perception of persons that what or how much they know about a product class. A small number of research studies on customer behavior reveal an encouraging affiliation between customer knowledge and conduct (Haron et al., 2005). Consumer's environmental understanding is considered as the key determinant of consumer attitude towards green consumption (Zhao et al., 2014).

However, other literature found that an amplified degree of understanding will not escort to further environmentally responsive behavior (Bartiaux, 2008). Hence an assorted empirical finding may indicate the intricate correlation between customer knowledge and behavior. Due to the mixed findings, researchers feel the importance to distinguish subjective and objective knowledge. This research work has treated consumer knowledge as moderating variable and focused on objective knowledge to compute how a lot of an individual knows. Consumers who comprise a superior level of knowledge are also known as experts (Alba Joseph & Hutchinson Wesley, 1987). A recent study on customer intention and environmental knowledge reveals that consumer decisions regarding the risk about the end of life products, customer's environmental knowledge, and some of the features linked with possible re-use, recycling, and repair may also affect the customer attitude regarding the reverse exchange of used products (Kianpour et al., 2017). Hence, the researcher hypothesized that:

**H7** Positive attitude between PET bottle exchange attitude and intention exists due to greater consumer knowledge.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research approach adopted for this study is deductive, followed by quantitative technique, explanatory design, and cross-sectional nature. Moreover, the research is causal testing the VBN constructs' effect in developing attitude and intention. Karachi city was the geographical area for this study. The population of Karachi according to the 2017 census is 14.9 million (Statistics, 2017).

### **3.2 Procedure**

For this study, Karachi city was divided into six districts. District East was selected randomly among six districts. The population of district East, according to the Pakistan

Bureau of statistics is 2.98 million. The primary data of this study was gathered by administering the adopted questionnaire and distributed among the sample of the targeted population using a self-administered Google form as well as through a paper-based survey.

### 3.3 Participants

Cluster sampling followed by convenient sampling was used to collect the data. As mentioned by Saunders et al, (2009) the non-probability sampling technique i.e convenient sampling is less accurate and involves bias. To cope with bias and accuracy, the researcher used the probability sampling technique i.e cluster sampling. According to Saunders et al, (2009) Cluster sampling is used where the geographical area is involved. The sample size was calculated with the help of a G Power sample size calculator and using Saunders et al, (2009) recommendations. According to Saunders et al, (2009) a sample size of 384 is enough for the generalization of the results to an unknown population with a 95% confidence interval. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. The first section of the instrument contains demographic information followed by five points Likert scale instruments of each variable.

### 4. Results

The constructs items, factor loadings, and sources were mentioned in table 1. The results indicated that the majority of items meet the threshold values.

**Table 1. Constructs, Items Factor loadings and their Sources**

<b>Variable and Factor</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Reference/ Source</b>
PGVECOL1	0.814	(Koller et al., 2011)
PGVECOL3	0.740	(Koller et al., 2011)
PGVECOL4	0.817	(Hartmann and Apaolaza-
PGVECOL5	0.858	Ibanez, 2012)
PGVECON1	0.852	(Mathwick, Malhotra and
PGVECON3	0.811	Rigdon, 2001)
PGVEXP1	0.766	
PGVEXP2	0.715	
PGVEXP3	0.728	
PGVSYM1	0.760	
PGVSYM2	0.810	
PGVSYM3	0.777	
<i>Attitude and PET bottle Intention</i>		Chan (2001)
ATT1	0.923	Han, Hsu, and Sheu (2010)
ATT2	0.934	
PETBEI1	0.907	
PETBEI2	0.914	

<b>Awareness of Consequences</b>		Jasson et al., (2011)
AC3	0.815	
AC4	0.694	
AC5	0.779	
<b>Ascription of Responsibility</b>		Jasson et al., (2011)
AR2	0.712	
AR4	0.625	
AR5	0.614	
<b>Consumer Knowledge</b>		Yao, Tian, Chen, Chen, Huang, Liang, and Chen (2009)
CKOW1	0.678	
CKOW3	0.324	
CKOW4	0.874	
<b>Personal Norms</b>		Jasson et al., (2011)
PN1	0.850	
PN2	0.503	
PN3	0.097	
PN4	0.397	
PN5	0.798	
PN6	0.567	
<b>Neutralization Technique</b>		Brunners et al. (2014)
ACC	0.777	
DoB	0.860	
DoR	0.816	

#### 4.1 Respondent's Profile

Out of the total 388 respondents, the majority of the respondents were male 243 (62.6 %), whereas 145 (37.4 %) respondents were female. Mostly the respondents were between the age of 25-29 and 30-39 years showing 32% and 29.6% respectively. The highest level of education turned out to be undergraduate 163 (42 %) and postgraduate 141 (36.3%) respectively. Furthermore, personal income was also asked from the respondents, the majority of the respondents' i.e 135 and 118 were having salaries between 20001-40000 and 40001-70000 with 34.8% and 30.4 % respectively. Lastly, the respondents were asked about the frequency of PET bottle exchange. The findings showed that 151 (38.9%) of the respondent's exchange PET bottles sometimes in their life and 92 (23.9%) of the respondents never exchange PET bottles.

#### 4.2 Correlation analysis

Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between PGV impact and outcomes. Perceived green value impact is positively related to AC ( $r=.633, p<0.01$ ). Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between AC and outcomes. Awareness

of consequence (AC) of VBN is positively related to the ascription of responsibility (AR), ( $r=.689, p<0.01$ ). Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between AR impact and outcomes. Perceived green value impact is positively related to PN ( $r=0.551, p<0.01$ ). Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between NEUT impact and outcomes. Neutralization impact is negatively related to PETBEI ( $r=-0.311, p<0.01$ ). Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between consumer knowledge impact and outcomes. Consumer knowledge impact is positively related to PETBEI ( $r=0.211, p<0.01$ ). Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant and strong positive relationship between attitude outcomes. PET bottle exchange attitude impact is positively related to PETBEI ( $r=0.7471, p<0.01$ ). The details are also shown in table 2.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix**

Variable Name	PGV	AC	AR	PN	NEUT	CKOW	ATT	PETBEI
PGV	1							
AC	.633*	1						
AR	.620*	.689*	1					
PN	.451*	.526*	.551*	1				
NEUT	.501*	.383*	.453*	.300*	1			
CKOW	.363*	.353*	.303*	.214*	.532**	1		
ATT	.561*	.582*	.442*	.450*	.227**	.194**	1	
PETBEI	.569*	.606*	.537*	.494*	.311**	.221**	.747*	1

**Table 3. Model Results**

	Items	Mean	SD	AVE	PGV	AC	AR	PN	ATT	NEU	CKOW	PETBEI
PGV	15	52.9124	9.94676	0.579	0.761							
AC	5	18.8760	3.80688	0.773	0.394	0.879						
AR	5	18.5155	3.37452	0.580	-0.009	-0.152	0.762					
PN	6	31.1525	8.13838	0.677	0.421	0.553	0.138	0.823				
ATT	3	9.8608	3.39040	0.628	0.486	0.453	0.155	0.453	0.793			
NEU	10	38.9637	8.52216	0.636	0.466	0.627	0.141	0.600	0.507	0.798		
CKOW	5	22.6408	6.12120	0.698	0.466	0.520	0.135	0.634	0.401	0.631	0.835	
PETBEI	3	10.4356	3.04123	0.742	0.274	0.406	0.223	0.520	0.355	0.422	0.447	0.862

**Table 4. Regression Model**

	Estimates	R2	Adjusted R2	F	t-value	Sig.	Results
PGV -> AC	.633	.400	.399	256.905	16.028	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
AC -> AR	.689	.475	.473	347.892	18.652	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
AR -> PN	.551	.304	.302	167.848	12.956	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
PN -> ATT	.450	.202	.200	97.560	9.877	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
ATT -> PETBEI	.747	.558	.557	487.123	22.071	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
CKOW -> PETBEI	.221	.049	.047	19.832	4.453	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported
NEUT -> PETBEI	.311	.097	.094	41.160	6.416	.000 <sup>b</sup>	Supported

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was examined for further analysis to study the relationship between the variables used in the current study. For examining the effect of VBN theory dimensions with possible outcome variables of the study, every path of the framework was analyzed. In this section, linear regression analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis about the direct effect of PGV on Awareness of consequence (AC) on Ascription of responsibility (AR) on personal norms (PN), then personal norms to the PET bottles exchange attitude and at the last effect on the PET bottles exchange intention. Finally, the effect of the neutralization technique was examined on the PET bottle exchange intention and the effect of other moderator consumer knowledge on PET bottle exchange is measured. Further, the results of the model summary (R2), ANOVA (F value), and coefficient value (t-value, sig value, and beta value) presented the relationship of variables with one another. Especially the investigation of research questions about the possible impact of the variables was carried out to test each hypothesis. All the hypotheses were supported and the detail is mentioned in table 4.

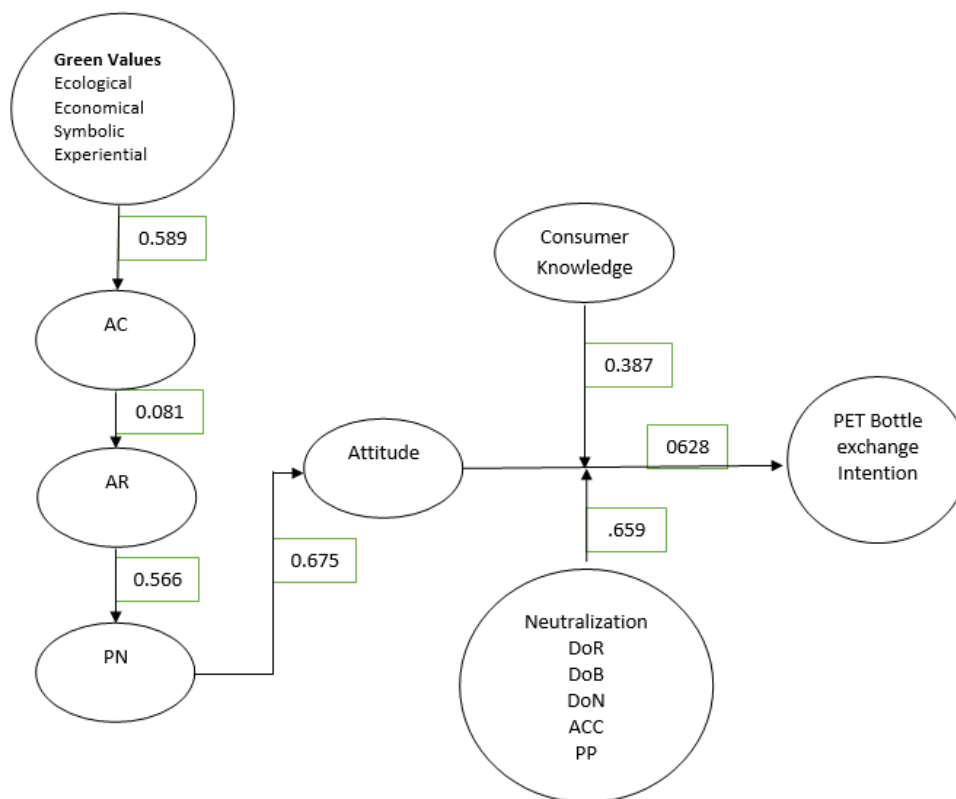


Figure 1. Research Framework

### 5. Discussion

The involvement of customers in the reverse exchange of PET bottles can be well understood with the understanding of VBN theory which suggests that people with more



personal green values and beliefs have a more positive attitude and intention towards PET bottle reverse exchange that shows their positive relationship between the human being and natural environment. Several studies have been conducted that proved the VBN theory successful to explain the individual's environmentally friendly attitude (Davis et al., 2014; Faize & Akhtar, 2020; Hwang et al., 2020). Besides this theory of planned behavior in combination with VBN theory has also been conducted by López-Mosquera & Sánchez, (2012), Yousafzai et al., (2010), Zhang et al., (2020), and Carfora et al., (2021) to predict the human decision making while engaging the utilization of environmentally friendly products and ecological friendly activities

Therefore, this study found a positive and significant relationship between the PGV and Awareness of consequence (AC). Among the PGV constructs, symbolic representation of individuals while engaging in PET bottle exchange was found prominent which showed that individuals engage in PET bottle exchange to demonstrate others that they are more conscious regarding environmental wellbeing. Besides this, the other factor that contributed marginally is the economical factor while exchanging the PET bottles exchange with a third party or with the company. This aspect highlights that people are engaging in PET bottle exchange as it is more convenient and easier to exchange the bottles soon after usage without making any extra physical or financial effort. Recently, Jabeen et al., (2021) conducted a study regarding the adoption of green energy technologies among Pakistani customers and found positive nexus between the PGV constructs and pro-environmental behavior. Similarly, Jayashankar et al., (2018) considered the adoption of IoT technology among US farmers and found that perceived green values are positively associated with the adoption of these technologies.

This study findings were also consistent with previous studies in establishing the positive and significant relationship between awareness of consequence (AC) and ascription of responsibility (AR). Among the AC items, the belief in a continuous increase in the waste of natural resources was found prominent followed by the representation of a resource shortage problem which showed that people are engaging in the PET bottle exchange to optimize the usage of natural resources. Similarly, the lowest priority of the respondents was found to decrease the greenhouse effect due to PET bottle exchange. As consumer knowledge was found to be low regarding the PET bottle exchange and environmental concerns due to which, it was found this priority. Previous research conducted by Steg et al. (2005) found that there was a strong positive linkage between AC and AR from the perspective of ecologically friendly behavior like appreciation of policies that are related to saving energy. Along with this, there was a significant positive relationship found between the ascription of responsibility (AR) and personal norms. Among the items of PN, thinking regarding the betterment of the environment in daily life was found prominent followed by personal norms regarding minimizing the wastage of resources.

The findings of this study are consistent with the previous research in the context of VBN implementation regarding public sphere pro-environmental behavior of Mongolian students and minimizing the use of energy (Liu et al., 2018; Steg & Vlek,

2009; Stern et al., 1999) or the behavior of customers regarding the use of environmentally friendly electricity and pro-environmental car pricing policy (Hansla et al., 2008; Hiratsuka et al., 2018). This study also found a strong relationship between PET bottle exchange attitude and PET bottle exchange intention. Among the intention items, a strong commitment by the respondents has been shown to engage themselves in PET bottle exchange activities. Numerous studies had proved that consumers' positive attitudes affect ecologically friendly intentions (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012; Jung et al., 2020).

Lastly, the role of the two moderators' i.e consumer knowledge and neutralization technique were evaluated. Consistent with the previous studies regarding consumer knowledge from the perspective of the environment, this study also proved the low level of knowledge. Among the items of consumer knowledge, reduction in environmental pollution due to the exchange of PET bottles was found very prominent among the respondents. Moreover, the weakest knowledge regarding environmental regulations was found among the respondents. However, being a moderator, consumer knowledge has played a role between attitude and intention. So far inconsistent findings have been found regarding the relationship between consumer knowledge and intention. Our research supports the most recent findings of (Faize & Akhtar, 2020; Haron et al., 2005; Maurer & Bogner, 2020; Paço & Lavrador, 2017; Zhao et al., 2014) that state that customer environmental knowledge is a strong determinant of customer attitude and intention.

The second moderator, neutralization has also supported the previous studies. Among the items of neutralization, the role of companies regarding the reverse exchange of PET bottles was found prominent by the customers. Besides this, the excuse of not knowing enough about PET bottle exchange and considering environmental problems too big played a moderate excuse or neutralization. Similar findings were reported by the previous literature regarding the implementation of neutralization and deviant behavior (Brunner, 2014; Fukukawa et al., 2019; Sharma, 2020; Zhou et al., 2022).

## **6. Conclusion**

This study was conducted to explain whether the value belief norm theory is successful in explaining the customer intention towards PET bottle exchange or not? The majority of the studies were conducted from the perspective of suppliers or operational end only a few studies have been conducted in the light of customer behavioral intention. This study provides empirical evidence for the relationship between VBN and customer intention. According to Stern (1999), the VBN theory helps highlight an individual's perception regarding his/her ethical obligations. Especially, this theory explains the mechanism of moving forward from a person's awareness regarding the consequences of environmental well-being or degradation to the sense of adopting friendly behavior regarding his/her actions. Hence, as a result, this sense of friendly behavior transfers into the attitude. Similarly, this study is consistent with the previous studies held on value belief norm theory (Ghazali et al., 2019; Hwang et al., 2020; Liobikienė & Poškus, 2019; Stern et al., 1999). Moreover, this study also elaborates on the

predecessors of consumers' PET bottle exchange attitudes with the help of a chain of five variables that impact each other. This study elaborates on values, especially green values, awareness of consequences (AC), the ascription of responsibility (AR), and individual norms, and also provides deep insight into the human attitude toward environmental wellbeing or environmental degradation. Besides this, four main dimensional scales regarding PGV i.e ecological, economical, symbolic, and experiential have also been examined and confirmed in the PET bottle exchange perspective. In addition, moderating the role of neutralization is also been discussed and results provide a deep insight into how a customer may promptly make excuses for not adopting the PET bottle exchange in their daily activities (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014).

## **6.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications**

### **6.1.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study has provided several theoretical and practical implications. This study has majorly focused on the practical implications as developing countries need managerial and legislative supports and implications that could promote reverse logistics functions among developing nations like developed countries. From a theoretical implication perspective, this study has adopted the VBN theory to explain the customer role in reverse logistics as customers were neglected in SCM literature. Further, the implementation of two moderators has provided an integrated hybrid model to SCM researchers that could help them to understand the important role of customers and these moderators in promoting customer attitude and intention.

### **6.1.2 Practical Implications**

The existing research on supply chain management focuses on the supplier and operations end only. This research participates in the previous contribution in a new context. This was the study among very few empirical studies in supply chain management that considers customers and understands the PET bottle exchange perception of the customers. This contribution may have some very significant implications for supply chain managers. The perspective of value addition for the customers in supply chain management has been discussed by Ho, Au, and Newton (2002) by incorporating vital business processes in the supply chain. These vital elements of business processes consist of building a relationship with customers, service provision to customers, fulfillment of customer demands, manufacturing flow management, purchasing, and development of new products. This research entails that reverse logistics may promote valuable psychological methodology to promote PET bottle exchange behavior among customers. Besides this, the study also entails that logistics managers should efficiently promote environmentally friendly messages in the promotion campaigns for their products so that customer neutralization can be reduced.

Moreover, to promote the acceptance of PET bottles exchange behavior frequency among customers, advertising efforts by promoters should be in line with government policies because this methodology increases the customer's awareness regarding the environment and also increases the responsibility towards ecological wellbeing.

Managers should promote the concept of reverse exchange regarding PET bottles as it is beneficial both for the customers and companies. Government policies should be implemented and backed by companies regarding environmental safety. Managers should also promote plastic waste management in line with the government to reduce the waste in the environment. Furthermore, our results highlighted that PET bottle users lack a comprehensive knowledge of waste management and disposal of PET bottles. Along with this marketing department of PET, bottle manufacturers and user companies should formulate a marketing strategy so that the customers perceived values and beliefs concerning PET bottles might be enhanced. This type of program should promote tricks that include advertisements on television, paper advertisement, seminars, and awareness campaigns. These types of programs not only enhance consumer knowledge regarding the reverse logistics of PET bottles and environmental well-being but also strengthen the relationship between companies and customers.

An additional very significant implication of this research work for RL officials is to enhance customer service in collaboration with the retailers as a bridge for exchanging knowledge among the producers and consumers. It may be very beneficial for the supply chain officials to raise knowledge among the retailers and use them as an effective medium between the producers and consumers of PET bottles to promote customers perceived green value and PET bottle exchange attitude and intention. In Pakistan, customers of PET bottles don't have adequate knowledge and technology/medium regarding their used PET bottle exchange. Although an adequate number of people are doing the exchange as the study reveals that they don't have a proper understanding of and purpose of this exchange. Besides this, companies in Pakistan also don't have the proper technology and services to recollect these used PET bottles for possible reuse, remanufacturing, recycling, or proper disposal. To promote the reverse exchange of PET bottles companies should adopt the following steps:

- 1). Companies have to establish a logistic system that is responsible for the recollection of PET bottles, their backward transportation, stock management of PET bottles, attracting customer attention towards the reverse exchange of PET bottles, and also control the system used to make these bottles able for re-use. These activities enhance value addition and hence increase the producer-seller relationship and enhance customer satisfaction and motivation.
- 2). Companies need to build up their sales to improve customer service. Customers are the key stakeholders in the reverse logistics of any product. Without their participation and willingness, the process of reverse logistics especially in the context of PET bottles is difficult to succeed. Moreover, a stipend provided to customers and selling the right product to them can boost their motivation and commitment regarding the reverse exchange.

## **6.2 Limitations, and Future Research**

Like other studies, this study has also some limitations that could serve as future research directions. Firstly, the geographical area for this study was narrowed and the

study used cross-sectional data for analysis. Due to narrowed geographical area, and cross-sectional nature, the results' generalizability was compromised. Future research can be conducted through longitudinal data collection by enhancing the geographical area to gauge behavioral intention. Secondly, the researcher used a non-probability sampling technique due to an unknown population that was considered inadequate in the generalization of results (Saunders et al, 2009). Future research can be conducted through probability sampling to gauge the generalization of the findings. Thirdly, the response of the respondents was inadequate due to the newly established concept of reverse logistics in the Pakistani context. A comprehensive strategy was adopted to educate the respondents regarding the reverse logistics concept. Therefore, 70 % of the data was gathered through hard copies, and distribution was carried out by visiting the respondent's offices and residences. In the future, all available mediums of data collection like Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and emails should be adopted to cope with the financial implications of studies. Lastly, the researcher has used two moderators. In the future, other moderators like green marketing, governmental support, environmental concern, and facility accessibility may be incorporated (Sari et al, 2021).

**Author Contributions:**

All authors equally in the Manuscript.

**Data Availability Statement:**

The data is with the authors and they do not want to make it public due to the confidentiality of respondents.

**Conflict of Interest:**

There exists no conflict among the authors.

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