

The Influence of Employee Involvement in Analytical Decision Making on Employee Creativity: A Case Study of Higher Education in Oman

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Abstract

To better prepare students for the workforce, Oman's private higher education sector is experiencing a transition to keep up with global trends and industry collaborations. This is with the goal of better-preparing students for the workforce. In a landscape currently defined by fierce competition, this underscores the importance of differentiating oneself from the competition. In the private higher education sector in Oman, this study aims to investigate the relationship between employee engagement, analytical decision-making, and employee innovation. Specifically, the study will focus on the private sector. The total number of questionnaire responses is 308, which is the final analysis. We can conclude that analytical decision-making acts as a mediator between employee involvement and creativity based on the facts that we have uncovered. To add insult to injury, each and every one of the ideas that were put out was discovered to be supported. The findings of this study contribute to a better knowledge of the creative potential of personnel working in the private higher education industry. Additionally, the findings provide suggestions for improvements to regulations that are currently in place.

Keywords: *Employee Involvement, Analytical Decision Making, Employees Creativity, Private Higher Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Oman has seen significant growth in its private higher education sector, with the government investing in regulatory frameworks (Liu et al., 2017), quality improvements, and financial support to create a sustainable environment for private education (Al-Abri, 2015). Efforts are being made to attract foreign universities, promote public-private collaboration, and enhance the quality of education and research (Al-Harthy, 2016). The lack of qualified teaching staff (Jahnke & Liebscher, 2020) poses a challenge due to the sector's rapid expansion, leading to the hiring of foreign faculty at a higher cost (Al-Abri, 2015).

In addressing these challenges, it is essential to focus on employee creativity, as it is crucial for organizational success (Al-Balushi et al., 2024; Al-Harthy, 2016). Employee involvement, which goes beyond simply following protocols, plays a significant role in driving creativity (Bonau, 2018). It is important for employees to actively contribute to the organization's goals and be devoted to their work (Carmeli et al., 2017). Managers should value their employees' opinions and involve them in decision-making processes to inspire them and enhance their commitment to the organization (Zeb et al., 2018).

Employee involvement in organizational tasks influences their attitude toward work and their alignment with the organization's objectives (Obembe & Lasisi, 2019). Employees with high involvement are more likely to strive for organizational goals and show lower turnover rates (Demir & Budur, 2021). Involvement in decision-making, also known as analytical decision-making (Pan et al., 2018), is essential for fostering creativity in academic staff and addressing challenges faced by private higher education institutions in Oman (Ike et al., 2017).

The lack of innovative thinkers (Sung & Choi, 2018) in higher education institutions underscores the importance of promoting creativity in academic staff for problem-solving (Abubakar et al., 2019). Analyzing the mechanisms behind creative behavior in academic staff is crucial for stimulating innovation in private higher education institutions (Bhatt et al., 2020). Employee involvement in analytical decision-making is key to

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ensuring organizational coherence (Groen et al., 2017), stability, and longevity, and overcoming issues such as turbulence, laxity, and high turnover rates (Hamid et al., 2020).

This study aims to explore the impact of employee involvement on employee creativity in the context of higher education in Oman and investigate the role of analytical decision-making in mediating this relationship. Understanding these dynamics can help institutions foster a culture of creativity and innovation to thrive in a competitive environment.

Employee Creativity

Creativity is essential for the success and growth of organizations, including universities. According to Chen et al. (2021), creativity is key to improving performance, effectiveness, and transformation within organizations (Chen et al., 2021). In the context of universities, Kim (2019) highlights the importance of creativity in adding value to services, meeting organizational goals, and adapting to societal changes (Kim, 2019). Additionally, (Cai et al., 2020) emphasize that creativity plays a critical role in generating new knowledge, businesses, and ideas within academic institutions (Cai et al., 2020).

Universities are pivotal in shaping the future workforce, and students expect innovative services and technological advancements (Hussein et al., 2021; Yasir & Majid, 2020). Thus, maintaining creativity is essential for universities to remain relevant and productive (Bierbaum et al., 2022). Moreover, it has been contended that the presence of employee creativity plays a vital role in stimulating innovation and attaining commercial triumph (Guo et al., 2021).

Investing in employees' knowledge, skills, and creativity is necessary for fostering innovation within organizations (Chen et al., 2021).

Employee creativity involves the creation of new ideas or solutions that are utilized within the organization (Nasifoglu et al., 2020). The creative process can be unpredictable and may face challenges such as delays, setbacks, and costs (Ahmad et al., 2022). Organizations need to provide employees with autonomy and freedom to encourage creative behavior (Yu et al., 2019). Additionally, organizational support can enhance employee creativity by creating a conducive environment for innovation (Liu et al., 2020).

Moreover, cultural and social contexts play a significant role in influencing creativity, as noted by Kremer et al., (2019). Sharing information and learning from others can also contribute to fostering creativity within organizations (Cai et al., 2020; Nelwan et al., 2024). In conclusion, creativity is a multifaceted concept that requires attention to all its components for organizations, including universities, to thrive and innovate effectively (Ahmad et al., 2023; Kremer et al., 2019).

Employee Involvement

Involvement in the workplace signifies a person's active engagement, mental presence, and concern for the tasks they are currently performing (Parent-Thirion et al., 2020). According to Fernández-Salinero et al. (2020), involvement also reflects how employees perceive the significance of their work. Mudrack, as cited by Fernández-Salinero et al. (2020), suggests that being involved in an organization is linked to personal development. This involvement represents an individual's emotional interest in their job, profession, and company. In today's competitive and challenging business environment, the importance of employee involvement has increased significantly.

Despite its importance, there is a lack of consensus on the definition and application of employee involvement (Demir, 2018). It is considered as an attitude towards work, defined by the level of psychological connection an individual has with their job and its perceived importance (Ćulibrk et al., 2018). Various researchers have developed different definitions of employee involvement, making managing and measuring consistently challenging. Without a universal definition, assessing the effectiveness of efforts to enhance employee involvement is difficult. Employee involvement has been part of business strategies since the early 20th century

and is described as engaging all employees in an organization to ensure their commitment and cooperation in achieving its goals (García et al., 2018).

Continuous improvement initiatives are more successful when employees are actively involved (van Assen, 2021). Factors such as empowerment, goal-setting participation, decentralized decision-making, performance measurement systems, rewards, training, and the use of common improvement methodologies all contribute to enhancing employee involvement and organizational performance (Yuspahrudin et al., 2020; Al-Najjar et al., 2024). Additionally, employee involvement is essential as it allows for sharing diverse perspectives and ideas, leading to innovation and problem-solving (Obiekwe, 2018). Encouraging employee involvement is crucial for fulfilling jobs, improving employee commitment and loyalty, leveraging their skills and expertise to gain a competitive edge, and thriving in today's competitive business landscape (Obiekwe & Zeb-Obipi, 2018).

Analytical Decision Making

Decision-making is a fundamental aspect of management, as it involves selecting the most suitable course of action from various alternatives to address a specific problem or capitalize on an opportunity (Habanik et al., 2020). The process of decision-making is crucial for achieving desired goals and ensuring organizational effectiveness (Zgrzepski IV, 2022). It involves choosing the most appropriate action to complete a task, enhancing productivity and promoting satisfaction among employees and managers (Wingard, 2019). Effective decision-making is considered the essence of management, as it impacts the success and efficiency of an organization (Saluga et al., 2020).

According to Stone and Freeman (1984), decision-making is the process of identifying and selecting a solution for a specific problem. It involves choosing a specific course of action from a range of alternatives. Decision-making in organizations is a complex process that involves balancing economic and social factors (Zgrzepski IV, 2022). Leaders need to consider both economic and human values when making decisions, as neglecting either can lead to negative consequences for the organization (Habanik et al., 2020). Instances of abrupt layoffs or service cuts and contradictory actions taken during chaotic situations can be attributed to a failure to balance economic and human values in decision-making (Wingard, 2019).

In summary, decision-making plays a crucial role in organizational management, as it involves selecting the most suitable course of action from various alternatives to address problems and capitalize on opportunities (Nelwan et al., 2024; Zgrzepski IV, 2022). Balancing economic and human values is essential for effective decision-making and organizational success. Leaders must strive to find a middle ground between these values to ensure optimal outcomes for the organization. This study focused on analytical decision-making.

Analytical decision-making tends to over-analyze a situation to find the best possible solution. In this style, employees tend to be more technical, to see things in detail, and may eventually become autocratic (Hafni & Nurlaelah, 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), as proposed by Bandura (2001), underscores the interconnectedness between personal characteristics, behaviors, and the environment, while also acknowledging the active role of individuals in shaping their experiences (Bandura, 2001). Bandura also introduced the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to come up with innovative and effective ideas necessary for organizational success (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Self-efficacy is crucial for fostering creativity, as it requires individuals to have high confidence in their ability to engage in creative tasks (Bandura, 1986).

Drawing on Bandura's SCT (1986) as the theoretical foundation, this study aims to explore the relationships among various factors related to creativity (Bandura, 1986). SCT is commonly used to examine the connections between different variables and creativity, making it particularly suitable for this investigation (Bandura, 1986). The theory emphasizes the importance of individuals' belief in their capabilities to engage in creative processes for maintaining their involvement and achieving desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986, 2001).

Employee creativity is essential for organizational success and is influenced by individual traits and environmental factors. SCT suggests that creativity is influenced by the interaction between individuals and their surroundings, with a supportive and collaborative work environment playing a key role in fostering creative behavior. By understanding the impact of the environment on creativity, organizations can create a conducive atmosphere that encourages innovation (Hamid et al., 2020; Lee, 2018). Therefore, the current study adopts SCT as the overarching theory to explore innovative work behavior, proposing a conceptual framework that includes employee involvement as the independent variable, analytical decision-making as the mediating variable, and employee creativity as the dependent variable (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, this study draws four research hypotheses below:

Hypothesis 1: Employee involvement has a significant positive effect on employee creativity.

Hypothesis 2: Employee involvement has a significant positive effect on analytical decision-making.

Hypothesis 3: Analytical decision-making has a significant positive effect on employee creativity.

Hypothesis 4: Analytical decision-making mediates the relationship between employee involvement and employee creativity.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study involved surveying 308 academic staff members from 7 private universities in Oman to examine the impact of employee involvement in decision-making on creativity. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's recommendations and 317 questionnaires were collected. After removing incomplete responses, 308 questionnaires were included in the final analysis.

Demographic data analysis was conducted using SPSS to gain insights into the profile of survey respondents, including characteristics such as age, gender, and education level. This information is essential for understanding the target audience and identifying potential relationships between different demographic groups. In this study, it was found that the majority of respondents were male (82%) and aged between 41-50 (48%), with a large proportion holding a Master's degree (43%).

Overall, the methodology employed in this study allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the impact of employee involvement in decision-making on creativity among academic staff in Omani private universities. The findings obtained from the data analysis provide valuable insights into the relationship between these variables and contribute to the existing literature on organizational behavior and management.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis And Constructs Reliability

The purpose of descriptive analysis is to provide an overview of quantitative data by presenting summary statistics that depict the behavior of variables in a dataset. These statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, help communicate the significance of the data. In Table 1, the mean values of the variables range between 2.9686 and 3.4797, while the standard deviation ranges from 0.61196 to 0.97349. The study has demonstrated satisfactory levels of acceptance for each variable. The summary statistics presented in Table 1 offer insights into the characteristics of the data.

On the other hand, reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of a product, service, or system in terms of quality, accuracy, and efficiency. It plays a crucial role in ensuring customer satisfaction and establishing the credibility of a system. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability is a statistical measure used to evaluate the internal consistency of a survey or questionnaire. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value indicates a stronger correlation between items and higher reliability of the measurements. The study mentioned demonstrates high reliability for all variables, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70. This suggests that the questionnaire is reliable and that the measurements are accurate and valid. The reliability analysis results in Table 1 confirm that the survey items effectively capture the intended constructs.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Constructs

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Involvement	2.9686	.70946	0.971
Analytical Decision Making	3.4797	.97349	0.920
Employee Creativity	3.3039	.81188	0.962

Source: Processed Data (2023)

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The main aim of the structural model is to assess hypotheses and offer explanations to research inquiries. The model is thoroughly examined, with empirical data supporting the underlying hypotheses. Smart PLS minimizes errors and enhances the explained variance in dependent variables. Bootstrapping is essential for evaluating the model in PLS-SEM. Table 2 illustrates the research hypotheses investigated in the structural model.

Table 2. Hypothesis Results

Hypotheses	T- Statistics	P-Value	Results
Hypothesis 1	7.470	0.000	Accept
Hypothesis 2	9.380	0.000	Accept
Hypothesis 3	9.285	0.000	Accept
Hypothesis 4	3.546 10.551 6.462	0.000 0.000 0.000	Accept

P-Value < 0.001, P-Value < 0.01, P-Value < 0.05

Source: Processed Data (2023)

Hypothesis 1: Employee involvement has a significant positive impact on employees' creativity, as supported by statistically significant results ($P < 0.001$, $T = 7.470$). This suggests that when employees are actively engaged in decision-making processes and problem-solving activities, it benefits their creativity. This conclusion is based on rigorous statistical analysis, providing strong evidence supporting the hypothesis.

It is essential to consider various factors that can influence the success of employee involvement in fostering creativity. Empowering employees to make decisions and take ownership of their work can enhance their motivation and engagement, leading to increased creativity. By involving employees in decision-making, organizations can leverage their diverse perspectives and expertise, resulting in a wider range of innovative ideas and solutions. Additionally, employee involvement can create a sense of psychological ownership and commitment to the organization. When employees feel valued, and their ideas are respected, they are more likely to be invested in their work, fostering a conducive environment for creativity.

Furthermore, employee involvement encourages a culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing within the organization. By providing opportunities for employees to collaborate and exchange ideas, organizations can promote the generation of creative solutions. This collaborative culture also encourages employees to challenge conventional practices and seek new approaches to problem-solving, further enhancing creativity.

Hypothesis 2: Employee involvement has been shown to have a significant positive impact on Analytical Decision Making. The statistical analysis results support this hypothesis, with a P-value of less than 0.001 and a T-value of 9.380 indicating a strong relationship between employee involvement and analytical decision-

making. This suggests that the influence of employee involvement on decision-making is not random and provides evidence in favor of the idea that involving employees in decision-making processes can lead to better outcomes.

When employees are included in decision-making processes, various perspectives and expertise are brought to the table. Employees possess unique insights and knowledge about their roles and work processes, which can greatly contribute to the quality of decision-making. Organizations can make more informed and effective decisions by leveraging this collective intelligence. In addition, involving employees in decision-making fosters a culture of trust and open communication within the organization. When employees are allowed to share their opinions and provide input, they feel valued and respected. This creates a positive work environment where employees feel empowered to raise concerns or suggest alternative solutions. As a result, decision-making becomes a collaborative process that encourages innovation and creativity.

In summary, involving employees in analytical decision-making has been shown to positively influence Analytical Decision Making. This collaborative approach leads to better decision outcomes and creates a culture of trust and open communication within organizations. By tapping into the collective intelligence of employees, organizations can make more informed and effective decisions that drive success and innovation.

Hypothesis 3: Analytical decision making significantly impacts employee creativity, as evidenced by statistically significant results ($P < 0.001$, $T = 9.285$). This suggests that analytical decision-making processes are crucial for nurturing and enhancing creativity among employees in the workplace. The influence of analytical decision-making on employee creativity is contingent upon the nature of the task. In routine or well-defined tasks, where creativity is not a primary requirement, an analytical decision-making approach may not impede creative thinking. In fact, it can provide employees with clear guidelines and structure, allowing them to focus on execution rather than idea generation.

However, an analytical decision-making style may hinder employee creativity in tasks that call for creative problem-solving, innovation, or the exploration of new ideas. Such tasks demand a high degree of autonomy, the freedom to experiment, and the capacity to think divergently. In these situations, employees may feel constrained by rigid guidelines and a lack of involvement in decision-making, leading to decreased motivation and diminished creativity. Moreover, individual and contextual factors can influence the relationship between analytical decision-making and employee creativity. For example, employees with a strong desire for autonomy and independence may perceive analytical decision-making as restrictive, hindering their creative potential. On the other hand, individuals who prefer structure and direction may thrive in an analytical decision-making environment.

In summary, analytical decision-making is a key factor in fostering employee creativity. The effectiveness of this approach in promoting creativity depends on the nature of the task and individual preferences. While it may be beneficial in certain contexts, it can also pose obstacles to creative thinking in tasks requiring originality and innovation. Thus, organizations should consider the balance between analytical decision-making and creativity in order to create a conducive environment for innovation and idea generation.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between employee involvement and employee creativity is influenced by analytical decision-making, as indicated by statistically significant results ($P < 0.001$, $T = 3.546, 10.551, 6.462$). This suggests that the extent to which employees are involved in decision-making impacts their creativity through the leadership style practiced by their superiors. When employees are given opportunities to participate in decision-making, it can enhance their sense of autonomy, ownership, and commitment to their work, leading to higher job satisfaction and motivation, fostering creativity.

However, the effect of employee involvement on creativity can be moderated by the leadership style employed. High levels of Analytical Decision Making may diminish the positive impact of employee involvement on creativity. A controlling leadership approach can restrict employees' freedom to explore new ideas, make independent decisions, and take risks, ultimately stifling creativity and inhibiting the development of innovative solutions.

In conclusion, analytical decision-making serves as a mediator in the relationship between employee involvement and employee creativity. It highlights the importance of considering the leadership style in place when examining employee involvement's impact on workplace creativity. By fostering a supportive and empowering environment for employees to participate in decision-making, organizations can enhance creativity and innovation among their workforces.

CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions in Oman are striving to improve their competitiveness and customer focus in order to demonstrate efficiency and success. It is crucial for these institutions to continuously succeed and recognize individual creativity in order to survive in a competitive environment. Employee involvement in analytical decision-making plays a significant role in enhancing creativity and productivity. However, managers' resistance to change poses a challenge in implementing reforms. A lack of high-level creative thinkers is also a concern in higher education institutes in Oman. Improving creative work behavior is essential for these institutions to excel in performance and effectively compete.

This study is grounded in social cognitive theory, which highlights the importance of individuals' belief in their ability to engage in creative processes. The theory suggests that human behavior is influenced by individuals' judgments of their own capabilities. Building on social cognitive theory and existing literature, the study proposes a conceptual framework with employee involvement as the independent variable, analytical decision-making as the mediating variable, and employee creativity as the dependent variable. The research aims to explore the relationship between these factors in higher education institutions in Oman through empirical testing using quantitative research methods.

This study has theoretical contributions by expanding on the componential theory of creativity and investigating the impact of employee involvement and decision-making on employee creativity in the context of higher education in Oman. It also sets a foundation for future research in this area. In terms of practical implications, the findings of this study can inform decision-makers and practitioners in the higher education sector about strategies to enhance employee creativity and ultimately improve institutional performance.

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