

Measuring the learning organization culture, organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the Lebanese banking sector

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The growing interest developed around the learning organization concept and its impact on work-related outcomes in the West has not been matched yet in other parts of the world. The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify the relationships among the learning organization culture, employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the Lebanese banking sector. Results showed positive and significant correlations among the different variables but no interaction effect of the Lebanese social patterns.

Keywords: learning organization; job satisfaction; organizational commitment; social patterns; international human resource development

Introduction

Increased globalization, management innovations, workforce diversity and technology advancement have led practitioners to adapt new management and development strategies, such as the learning organization concept (Ortenblad 2004), knowledge management (Eisenhardt and Santos 2002) and communities of practice (Wenger 2004). These management practices dominated over conventional work settings in Western economies (Cummings and Worley 2005). At the same time, researchers interested in organizational development continue to explore new trends and study how different learning concepts affect performance outcomes in different organizational settings. One of these concepts is the learning organization (Argyris and Schon 1978; Senge 1990; Watkins and Marsick 1996, 2003). The learning organization concept represents an area of study that is continuously evolving, with respect to not only the application of relevant theory but also the development and consolidation of such theory (Yang, Watkins, and Marsick 2004).

The growing interest developed around the learning organization concept or its impact on performance outcomes in the West (Marsick, Bitterman, and van der Veen 2000; Marquardt 2002; Marsick and Watkins 2003) has not been matched yet in other parts of the world with different social and organizational cultures, neither theoretically nor empirically. For example, there are no equivalent efforts in countries such as Lebanon and other developing countries to provide evidence

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supporting the learning organization concept. Specifically, studies regarding such relationships in Lebanese organizations could not be located (Dirani 2006). This raises the question whether such innovative concepts that have been applied successfully in the West can be applied in different settings (Walumbwa and Lawler 2003).

The purpose of this study was to extend the body of the learning organization research and to understand how learning cultures in organizations correlate with employees' work-related attitudes in Lebanon. The organizational setting for this study was the banking sector in Lebanon through the study of five major banks.

Background of the Lebanese culture and banking sector

The Lebanon culture, although 'open and modern', is different from that in the Western countries (Dirani 2006). The Lebanese culture is generally considered to be family oriented (Eickelman 1981), hospitable (Jabbara 1989) and status conscious (Constantine 2005). Constantine (2005) suggested that status consciousness in the Lebanese culture is seen through deference to others according to their social status. Jabbara (1989) found that the Lebanese society places a special emphasis on social conformity rather than creativity or innovation. Large power distance and collectivism were predominant dimension characteristics in Hofstede's (1984) international comparison on work-related values. Therefore, obedience to authority and control are reflected in the Lebanese culture.

At the organizational level, the organizational culture in Lebanon provides little support to human resource development (HRD), knowledge management and learning in the workplace (Dirani 2006). HRD is equated mainly with the short-term, *ad hoc* training of employees. At the same time, employees are emotionally dependent on their institutions and organizations. When handling interpersonal conflicts, Lebanese tend to use an avoiding and non-integrating style (Constantine 2005). Individuals in managerial positions tend to use more assertive and less accommodative styles with their subordinates; be rigid with instructions; have a highly authoritarian tone; and rely on personal contacts and on their social positions and family influences (Barakat 1993).

The banking sector in Lebanon is considered one of the more important sources of the country's gross domestic product (40% GDP) and as a significant income-generator (Association of Banks in Lebanon 2005). Most banks in Lebanon are family-owned businesses and have been a unique and prosperous source of national income since the 1950s. The advanced free-market-based banking system adopted by the government and the liberal environment relative to the surrounding region, along with oil strong profits in neighbouring countries, have resulted in money flooding into the Lebanese banks. Lebanon became known as the Switzerland of the Middle East (Pheraon 1993). Even with the current global financial crises, the Association of Banks in Lebanon had reported a 6.5% increase in 2008's third-quarter share profits.

Organizational size has been shown to influence various HRD practices, including formal and informal employee training, career development, and organizational development. Usually, large firms place dedicated HRD professionals into human resource departments and are likely to be involved in the learning and development processes as compared to smaller firms where senior managers and administrators assume such duties (Harney and Dundon 2006). Given that the focus of this study is organizations with standalone HRD departments, it was assumed

that such departments were more likely to be associated with bigger banks. Besides, banks in Lebanon form an excellent and accessible medium that represents the social and cultural values and norms of the Lebanese society. Therefore, the major local banks (classified as alpha banks) were included in the population for this study.

Organizational learning culture

The concept of the learning organization is based on comprehensive theories of learning developed in the Western context. Within the HRD field, the learning organization theory emerged in response to a paradigm shift in society and work-related systems.

Scholars have made numerous attempts to define the concept of the learning organization, 'as if the idea was homogenous' (Ortenblad 2002, 213). Some researchers point out that the concept itself is still vague and confusing (Fulmer et al. 1998) and some are happy with that (Watkins and Golembiewski 1995). Others acknowledge the difficulty of describing what a complete learning organization looks like (e.g. Marquardt and Berger 2003; Pedler and Aspinwall 1998; Watkins and Marsick 1993). Scholars argue that each company produces its own learning organization and these specific learning organizations are dynamically and continually changing. Many authors use the terms learning organization and organizational learning interchangeably (e.g. Preskill and Torres 1999; Fulmer et al. 1998). Some authors use the term learning company (Pedler and Aspinwall 1998).

The learning organization is an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future (Ortenblad 2002). It refers to strategies that are set to enhance organizational learning. Watkins and Marsick (1993, 118) defined the learning organization as 'one that learns continuously and transforms itself' and one that is 'characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles.' Sugarman (2001) considered that a learning organization could be recognized from the outside and from the inside. From the outside, a learning organization could be recognized by its agility in changing how it relates to the external world and how it conducts its external operations. From the inside, the learning organization could be recognized by a culture in which learning from challenges and mistakes is central (Sugarman 2001).

Holland (in Pedler and Aspinwall 1998) declared that if people were going to survive as individuals, as organizations or as societies, they need to create a tradition of learning companies. Sugarman (2001) considered that a learning organization would be good at creating new solutions and good at sharing knowledge with other members who may need it. Thus, there should be openness to new ideas, wherever they come from, and to sharing knowledge for the good of the business (Watkins and Marsick 2003).

Although the learning organization provides a coordinated system focused on organizational learning (Swanson and Holton 2001), the learning organization theory has practical limitations. Garvin (1993) argued that the different conceptual frameworks (e.g. Senge 1990; Watkins and Marsick 1993) of the learning organization were abstract. Garvin considered that making a meaning of learning, managing the acquired learning, and measuring the results of learning as the required tools for a learning organization (Yang 2003). Ortenblad (2002) viewed the learning organization as a process that needs effort. He considered the change of

behaviour of the organization to be a requisite for the learning organization. Contu and Willmott (2003) pointed out that the learning organization failed to focus on learning situated nature.

Implementing the learning organization philosophy in the workplace is not simple. Sun and Scott (2003) pointed to the absence of a link between the learning organization culture and the learning processes. Watkins and Marsick (1993, 2003) argued that the learning organization was not a collection of individuals learning within the organization; rather they considered it as a process occurring at different levels of the organization. Marsick, Bitterman, and van der Veen (2000) implied a transformation from learning organizations to communities of practice that share a passion for their work, and that interact to learn how to improve (see also Wenger 2004).

As the demands of the workplace continuously change, companies are paying more attention to creating a learning culture (Park 2001), resulting in the creation of learning organizations (Marquardt 2002). Marquardt argued that learning in a learning organization culture is recognized as critical for business success and as a habitual and integrated part of all organizational functions. Creating a learning environment entails three pertinent points: sharing, participating and collaborating (Marsick, Bitterman, and van der Veen 2000; Ortenblad 2004; Senge 1990; Watkins and Marsick 1993). Becoming an organization that strives to create a culture conducive to employees' learning can help facilitate organizational change, enhance performance and thereby maintain sustainable competitive advantage (Preskill 2005; Senge 1990; Watkins and Marsick 2003). In short, how organizations learn, share knowledge and utilize a learning culture allows them to manage the many challenges they face in the modern business era.

Several empirical studies showed strong correlation between learning organization cultures and work-related outcomes such as performance, productivity, turnover intention, job satisfaction and organization commitment (Egan, Yang, and Bartlett 2004; Ellinger et al. 2002; Wang 2005). Egan, Yang, and Bartlett (2004) suggested a significant correlation between organizational learning culture and job satisfaction, motivation to transfer and turnover intention. Ellinger and colleagues (2002) explored the relationship between the learning organization culture and organizational financial performance. In an international context, Zhang, Zhang, and Yang (2004) investigated the applicability of the learning organization in the Chinese context. Little research has been done in this area in the Lebanese context. The following sections provide an overview of job satisfaction and organization commitment followed by a conceptual framework for this study.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been a core topic for researchers for a long time. Scholars have examined antecedents of job satisfaction, dimensions of job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction and work-related outcomes such as commitment and turnover intentions (Fields 2002). Job satisfaction cannot be viewed in isolation from the social environment of the complex organizational setting to which satisfaction reports are directed. Job satisfaction can be attributed to two factors, environmental antecedents and personal factors (Spector 1997).

Environmental antecedents of job satisfaction pertain to factors associated with the work itself or work environment (extrinsic), while personal factors focus on individual attributes and characteristics (intrinsic). Ellickson (2002) suggested that

both extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfactions could be affected negatively if organizational cultural dimensions, such as open lines of communication, trust, friendliness and teamwork had presented obstacles to employees or to the organization. Kim (2002) stressed the importance of intrinsic rewards over extrinsic or monetary rewards. He argued that, overall, workers satisfied with their jobs produced work of higher quality and quantity for their organization.

In general, research has shown that job satisfaction affected people's willingness to help colleagues and work associates and their disposition to share and cooperate in different forms to maintain organized structures that govern work (Iverson and Maguire 2000). Research on job satisfaction in Lebanon is scarce and thus it is important to explore.

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is another important factor that influences employees' productivity and an important performance indicator for organizations (Meyer and Allen 1997). Some researchers argue that it is critical to have employees committed to their employing organization in order for these organizations to be successful in today's competitive environment (Ketchand and Strawser 2001). Meyer and Allen (1997) suggested that employees who were strongly committed to their organizations identify with, get involved in and feel loyal towards their organizations.

The various overviews of organizational commitment reflect a framework with three broad themes: affective, continuance and normative (Meyer and Allen 1997). Dunham, Grube, and Castaneda (1994) found that organizational commitment can be measured using primarily the affective commitment theme. Ketchand and Strawser (2001, 222) defined affective commitment as 'an individual's emotional attachment to an organization formed because that individual identifies with the goals of the organization and is willing to assist the organization in achieving these goals.'

Research on organizational commitment in the West, and internationally, is abundant. Researchers have found that organizational commitment is linked closely to a number of aspects of organizational behaviours such as performance effectiveness, turnover and retention, job satisfaction, absenteeism and productivity (Ketchand and Strawser 2001). This study used affective commitment measures to test for organizational commitment within the Lebanese banks.

Social patterns

International and comparative research, regardless of specific topics studied, continuously refers to culture or social patterns (Triandis 1995). One way to measure social patterns is to look at the constructs of individualism and collectivism. Societies in which people's primary concern tends to be with the self and with the nuclear family are considered individualistic. People's focus is on personal achievement and independence (Kagitcibasi 1994; Markus and Kitayama 1998). Individualism is to a large extent a characteristic of Anglo and western European countries (Hofstede 1984). On the other hand, people in collectivist countries tend to see themselves as embedded in a network of social connections that include extended families and other groups. Collectivists focus on interconnectedness with others (Markus and Kitayama 1998) and people in collectivistic cultures are encouraged to explore their need for belonging (Kagitcibasi 1994). Falicov (2001) discussed how collectivistic beliefs give priority to family

connectedness over the needs of the individual. Several studies have suggested that Asian (Hofstede 1984; Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier 2002), East European (Spector et al. 2001) and Latin American (Friedrich, Mesquita, and Hatum 2006; Hofstede 1984) societies are collectivistic. The differences between people in individualistic and those in collectivistic societies lead to expected differences in how work demands and organizational cultures might lead to different results with job satisfaction and organization commitment.

Several researchers have studied how individualism and collectivism moderate different organizational behaviours (Dorfman 1996; House, Wright, and Aditya 1997). Spector et al. (2001) noted that the Chinese, in comparison to North Americans, tend to place more emphasis on work than on leisure, are less concerned about work intruding on non-work, and see work as contributing to the family rather than competing with it. Yang (2005) argued that in individualistic societies, people view work as a means to personal achievement and development. On the other hand, in collectivistic society where people view the individual in terms of social networks, work roles are seen as serving the needs of the in-group rather than the individual. Yang also argued that people who put extra effort into work are seen as making sacrifices for their in-groups. Research on the moderating effect of individualism and collectivism on the relationships between workplace learning and performance outcomes have provided inconsistent findings (Hill et al. 2004; Spector et al. 2004; Yang 2005). A plausible explanation of such inconsistencies, Hill et al. (2004) noted, is that a strong organizational culture may diminished the effect of the local culture.

Most of these studies have been done in the Western context. Although these studies provided significant insights and noteworthy recommendations, the fact that they were performed in the context of the West leads to the question of generalizability to other cultural settings (Walumbwa and Lawler 2003).

In the current study, individualism and collectivism dimensions were studied using Triandis' (1995) cultural framework. This framework was selected for several reasons. First, individualism and collectivism are cultural factors that are widely studied in the organization development literature (Kagitcibasi 1994; Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier 2002; Triandis 1995). Second, the constructs are of particular interest to cross-cultural researchers (Triandis 1995). Third, individualism and collectivism research takes place at two distinct levels of analysis – individual and cultural – of which this research is interested specifically in the individual level.

Finally, the constructs have the potential to explain variations in economic development through resembling the achievement motivation construct (Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier 2002). Nevertheless, the apparent simplicity of the constructs as one dimension explaining more with less is dangerous because the constructs might constitute an all-purpose construct used to explain every behavioural variation between individualistic and collectivist cultures (Fijneman, Willemsen, and Poortinga 1996).

Theoretical framework

For this study, the learning organization culture was based on the conceptualization of Watkins and Marsick (1996, 2003) of the learning organization. Watkins and Marsick (1996) provided a model for the learning organization and suggested that people learn on individual bases first, and then learn as clusters, teams, networks and increasingly large units when they join together in organizational change.

Watkins and Marsick's (1996, 2003) model was operationalized by the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ). The DLOQ has

seven dimensions: continuous learning, empowerment, team learning, embedded systems, systems connections, dialogue and inquiry, and providing leadership.

The DLOQ grew out of both research and practice (Watkins and Marsick 2003) and was tested and validated empirically (Hernandez 2003; Sta. Maria 2003; Yang 2003, Yang, Watkins, and Marsick 2004). The DLOQ was translated and used in several languages, including Spanish, Dutch, Malay, Korean and Chinese. This is a first attempt to translate the DLOQ into Arabic and to utilize the instrument in the Lebanese context.

The DLOQ seven dimensions served as independent variables. The dependent variables consisted of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction in the model was based on the ‘Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire’ (MSQ) developed by Weiss et al. (1967). The organizational commitment in the model was based on the shortened version of the ‘Organizational Commitment Questionnaire’ (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). The social patterns in Lebanon served as the moderating variable and were measured using the Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Questionnaire (INDCOL) developed by Triandis (1995). The framework model for this study is shown in Figure 1.

Research questions

Assuming that western theoretical foundations and ‘best practices’ are somewhat applicable in the Lebanese context, the study was designed to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the DLOQ scales of the learning organization culture (Watkins and Marsick 2003) and affective organizational commitment as work-related outcome in the context of the Lebanese banking sector?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the DLOQ scales of the learning organization culture and intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction as work-related outcomes in the context of the Lebanese banking sector?

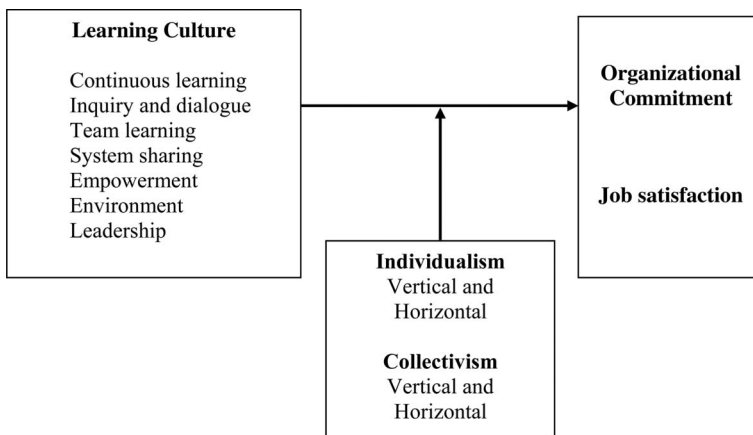


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationships among learning organization, organization commitment and job satisfaction with individualism and collectivism as a moderator.

RQ3: To what extent, if any, do social patterns (in this case, horizontal and vertical collectivism and individualism) moderate the relationships between DLOQ scales of the learning organization culture, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in the participant banks?

Research methods

This paper was based on quantitative survey measures (Gall, Borg, and Gall 1996). The use of a survey to collect data from bank employees in Lebanon was deemed appropriate to address the proposed research questions. Gall, Borg, and Gall considered employee surveys as the most frequently used data collection method in organizational research. Data were collected using convenience sampling in five Lebanese banks. The choice of these banks was driven by the focus of the study and by feasibility considerations. While the selection of this sector controls for organizational type, it provides sufficient variation to test the research questions.

Sampling frame

The directory of Association of Banks in Lebanon (2005) lists 48 national banks as its constituent members. The banks were classified based on the size of their deposits. They were divided into four 'money deposits' categories (alpha, beta, gamma and delta banks). As of 2005, alpha banks in Lebanon accounted for 65% of all banking services and included banks with deposits over 2 billion USD (10 banks). Given that the focus of this study was banks with standalone HRD departments, it was assumed that such departments were more likely to be associated with alpha banks. Therefore, only banks with alpha classification were included in the population for this study. The list of banks and their rankings are summarized in Table 1.

All 10 alpha banks were initially invited to participate in this study. Five agreed to participate. An overview of these five alpha banks is provided in Table 2.

The population for this study comprised all service employees of the alpha banks in Lebanon and their managers. The general responsibilities for service employees include customer service (checking and saving accounts), loans (home equity, auto, personal), and product marketing and sales (payment cards, checking and saving plans).

Table 1. Ranking of alpha banks by staff employed.

Alpha bank rank	Staff
1 ^a	1903
2	1358
3 ^a	1160
4 ^a	1078
5	1027
6	976
7 ^a	950
8	698
9	630
10 ^a	556

Note: Data adopted from Association of Banks in Lebanon (2005).

^aBanks that agreed to participate in the study.

Table 2. Overview of the five banks.

Aspect	Bank A	Bank B	Bank C	Bank D	Bank E
Rank	4	1	10	3	7
Capital in billion LBP	315	304	72	210	10.6
Branches	52	73	32	44	41
Number of employees	1078	1903	556	1160	950
ATM	56	111	37	51	57

Note: Data from Association of Banks in Lebanon (2005).

The lack of organizational research in the Lebanese corporate world renders the option for probability sampling for this study rather impossible. As a result, non-probability sampling was used in this study. The sample frame consisted of service employees who were conveniently selected from specific branches within the five different banks. The five banks provided access to a selected number of branches at different locations throughout Lebanon. Data collection was conducted on site between May and July 2006. Three in-person visits and follow-up reminders to participating branches were scheduled for data collection (Mangione 1995). Procedures for data collection were administered based on the guarantee of maintaining complete anonymity and confidentiality of respondents' personal information, which were explicitly emphasized both in the questionnaire and in the consent letters. The sample was composed of 922 participants with 298 valid returned responses (response rate = 32%).

Instrument

The research design and data collection approaches relied primarily on a four-section survey instrument. Four questionnaires including DLOQ, OCQ, MSQ and INDCOL were bundled together into one survey instrument. The original questionnaires in English were translated and validated into Arabic for use in the Lebanese context and the translated instrument was named the Arabic Learning Organization Questionnaire (ALOQ). To address issues related to reliability and validity, it was important to use a reliable instrument and to administer it in a standardized manner (Swanson and Holton 2001). A major challenge was related to adapting the ALOQ into a form that can maintain the meaning and psychometric properties of the original instrument, and establish generalizable scales across cultural settings (Chen and Bates 2005). Demographic items including gender, age, income, experience and education were added to measure basic demographics.

Instrument translation

To enable data collection in the Lebanese context, it was necessary to translate the instrument into Arabic. The translation technique used in this study followed the forward-then-back translation approach (Chen and Bates 2005). This technique provided for the most accurate translation of the ALOQ.

The final instrument was produced in both Arabic and English and contained a total of 82 items divided into four sections as follows: 43 items in Section I (learning organization culture), 9 items in Section II (organization commitment), 20 items in

Section III (job satisfaction), 5 items in Section IV (social patterns) and 5 items in Section V (demographics).

Validity and reliability

Validation procedures involved initial consultation with two expert researchers fluent in both English and Arabic. The two researchers were asked to review the instrument and examine the clarity in meaning of the items in order to refine the translation. The two researchers also judged the face and content validity of the ALOQ as adequate. A pilot study was conducted with 30 branch managers from the five participating banks. The pilot results provided information that led to minor changes to some words and questions. Based on their responses and comments, some content and words were revised in order to make the meaning clearer, such as 'manager' instead of 'boss', 'bank' instead of 'organization' and 'employee' instead of 'worker'. Scale reliability measures resulting from the current study ranged between .79 (create continuous learning opportunities, Cronbach's alpha: $\alpha = .79$) to .94 (overall learning organization culture, Cronbach's alpha: $\alpha = .94$). A summary of Cronbach's alpha reliability results for all scales are included in Table 1.

Demographic characteristics

Demographic results showed that female employees represented 54% of respondents. For age groups, the majority of respondents were young employees in the 25–34 age category (40%). For rank, 62% of respondents were service employees, 23% were assistant managers and 15% were managers. For income, the majority of employees (64%) earned \$1000 or less per month, 24% earned between \$1000 and \$2000, and only 12% of respondents earned more than \$2000 per month. For location, 70% of respondents were located in the capital, Beirut, 15% were located in branches in main cities, and 15% were from rural locations. For employees' numbers per branch, results showed that two-thirds (69%) of branches employed 12 or fewer employees and one-third (31%) of branches had 13 or more employees. For respondents' levels of education, the majority of respondents (95%) had university level education and only 5% were holders of other types of degrees or certificates.

Results

Several data analysis techniques were used in this study in accordance with the three research questions. Correlation analysis was used to answer research questions one and two, and multiple regression statistics were used to answer research question three.

Learning organization culture and work-related outcomes

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to evaluate the relationship among the learning organization culture, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Correlations above .70 are referred to as highly positive relationships, correlations between .40 and .60 as moderate positive relationships, and between .10 and .30 as small or weak positive relationships. The correlation matrix is presented in Table 3. This matrix indicates significant relationships between the learning organization culture seven dimensions, organizational commitment and

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and correlation between seven dimensions of learning organization (LO), organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. LO1	(.79)											
2. LO2	.61**	(.84)										
3. LO3	.60**	.71**	(.81)									
4. LO4	.60**	.52**	.64**	(.84)								
5. LO5	.64**	.52**	.66**	.71**	(.84)							
6. LO6	.60**	.53**	.67**	.67**	.75**	(.85)						
7. LO7	.61**	.51**	.55**	.69**	.66**	.72**	(.89)					
8. Total LO	.81**	.77**	.84**	.84**	.86**	.86**	.83**	(.94)				
9. Affective	.46**	.42**	.49**	.54**	.49**	.54**	.57**	.63**	(.89)			
10. Intrinsic	.44**	.45**	.51**	.53**	.57**	.58**	.59**	.64**	.68**	(.89)		
11. Extrinsic	.53**	.60**	.63**	.59**	.58**	.60**	.60**	.74**	.68**	.79**	(.84)	
12. Overall	.51**	.54**	.60**	.59**	.61**	.63**	.63**	.73**	.73**	.96**	.92**	(.93)

Notes: LO1: Creating continuous learning opportunities; LO2: Promoting inquiry and dialogue; LO3: Encouraging collaboration and team learning; LO4: Empowering people toward a collective vision; LO5: Establishing systems to capture and share learning; LO6: Connecting the organization to its environment; LO7: Providing strategic leadership for learning.

**p < .01.

() Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient.

job satisfaction. Coefficients were significant at .01 levels for all outcomes. Learning organization culture scales were positively moderately correlated among themselves ($.51 \leq r \leq .75$, $p < .01$). Intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction scales were positively highly correlated ($r = .79$, $p < .01$).

Research question 1: learning culture and organizational commitment

Pearson correlation results indicated that there is a significant moderate relationship between learning organization culture seven dimensions and organizational commitment ($.42 \leq r \leq .57$, $p < .01$). Coefficients ranged from $r = .42$ for 'promoting inquiry and dialogue' to $r = .57$ for 'providing strategic leadership for learning.'

Additional analyses were run to measure the magnitude of influence of overall learning organization culture (measured by all 43 learning organization culture items) on organizational commitment. Bivariate regression analysis indicated that 39.7% of the variance (see Table 4) associated with organizational commitment is explained by the overall learning organization culture ($R^2 = .397$, $p < .01$).

In addition, multiple regression analyses were run to measure the magnitude of influence of the total learning organization scale on organizational commitment using the stepwise method. For the final model, the following results were reported: Adjusted $R^2 = .40$; $F_{1,208} = 4.3$, $p < .05$. The final model consisted of four significant predictor variables including: (a) LO7: Providing leadership; (b) LO4: Empowering people; (c) LO2: Promoting inquiry and dialogue; and (d) LO6: System connectedness. The remaining dimensions of the learning organization (LO1: Creating continuous learning; LO3: Team learning; and LO5: Shared systems) were not significant predictors in this model.

Table 4. Regression model summary for seven dimensions of learning organization culture as predictors of organizational commitment.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			
					R ² change	F change	df1	df2
1	.58 ^a	.34	.33**	.50	.34	106.78	1	211
2	.61 ^b	.38	.37**	.49	.04	13.48	1	210
3	.63 ^c	.40	.39**	.48	.02	8.39	1	209
4	.64 ^d	.41	.40*	.48	.01	4.30	1	208

Notes: ^aPredictors: (Constant), LO7. ^bPredictors: (Constant), LO7, LO4. ^cPredictors: (Constant), LO7, LO4, LO2. ^dPredictors: (Constant), LO7, LO4, LO2, LO6. Dependent variable: Organizational commitment.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Research question 2: learning culture and job satisfaction

The Pearson correlation results indicated that there is a positive moderate relationship between learning organization culture seven dimensions and intrinsic job satisfaction ($.44 \leq r \leq .59$, $p < .01$), extrinsic job satisfaction ($.53 \leq r \leq .63$, $p < .01$) and overall job satisfaction ($.51 \leq r \leq .63$, $p < .01$). For intrinsic job satisfaction, coefficients ranged from .44 for 'creating continuous learning

opportunities' to .59 for 'providing strategic leadership for learning' with significance levels of .01. For extrinsic job satisfaction, coefficients ranged from .53 for 'creating continuous learning opportunities' to .63 for 'encouraging collaboration and team learning' with significance levels of .01. And, for overall job satisfaction, coefficients ranged from .51 for 'creating continuous learning opportunities' to .63 for two dimensions: 'Connecting the organization to its environment' and 'providing strategic leadership for learning' ($p < .01$).

Additional analyses were run to measure the amount of influence of overall learning organization culture (measured by all 43 learning organization culture items) had on overall job satisfaction. Bivariate regression analysis indicated that 52.8% of the variance associated with job satisfaction (see Table 5) is explained by the overall learning organization culture ($R^2 = .397$, $p < .01$).

For the final model, the following results were reported: Adjusted $R^2 = .53$; $F_{1,199} = 7.41$, $p < .05$. The final model consisted of four significant predictor variables including: (a) LO6: System connectedness; (b) LO7: Providing leadership; (c) LO2: Promoting inquiry and dialogue; and (d) LO5: Shared systems. Summaries for job satisfaction statistical significance and F values are provided in Table 5. The remaining dimensions of the learning organization (LO1: Creating continuous learning; LO3: Team learning; and LO4: Empowering people) as well as the demographic variables were not significant predictors in this model. It is an interesting finding that LO1 and LO3 are not significant predictors of both organizational commitment and job satisfaction. This result is related to what was mentioned in the previous section regarding the structure of the Lebanese society.

Table 5. Regression model summary for learning organization culture seven dimensions as predictors of overall job satisfaction.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics			
					R ² change	F change	df1	df2
1	.64 ^a	.41	.40**	.50	.41	138.10	1	202
2	.70 ^b	.50	.49**	.46	.09	35.53	1	201
3	.72 ^c	.52	.52**	.45	.03	12.22	1	200
4	.74 ^d	.54	.53*	.44	.02	7.41	1	199

Notes: ^aPredictors: (Constant), LO6. ^bPredictors: (Constant), LO6, LO2. ^cPredictors: (Constant), LO6, LO2, LO5. ^dPredictors: (Constant), LO6, LO2, LO7, LO5. Dependent variable: Overall job satisfaction. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Research question 3: moderating effect of social patterns

The interaction between the moderator variable (horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism) with learning organization was tested to find whether this interaction predicts a change of effect on the outcome variables. Using the method described by Aiken and West (1991), linear regression analysis was used to test for main effects (learning organization culture and four social patterns dimensions) and the interaction terms (seven dimensions of the learning organization culture multiplied by each of the four social patterns dimensions) on organization commitment and overall job satisfaction.

Moderating effects on organizational commitment

The regression results of the moderating effect of social patterns on the relationship between each of the seven dimensions of the learning organization culture and organizational commitment were examined with a regression analysis model. In each model of the moderated regression analysis, predictors included one dimension of the learning organization culture, one social pattern variable (HI, VI, HC or VC) and the product of these two variables. These three variables were dummy-coded and entered in the regression formulas step-by-step in the order they were described. Dummy coding was used to distinguish the four social pattern variables. The numbers 0 and 1 were used where responses were given a value of '1' if they were in the treated group and a value of '0' if they were in the control group. For example, responses with an average less than one for HC were coded as '1' and all other scores were coded as '0'. This procedure helped to switch between the different variables at hand. In addition, although dummy variables are nominal-level variables, they were treated statistically as interval-level variables.

When a product term had a significant regression coefficient, it meant that the social pattern variable in the model had a significant moderating effect. This analysis revealed that whether individuals were more individualistic or collectivist in their behaviour, R^2 change was not significant. For example, the moderating effect of HI on the relationship between LO1 and organizational commitment gave the following result: $R^2 = .408$, R^2 change = .415. To simplify the analysis, HI and VI were combined into one individualism variable (IND) and HC and VC were combined into one collectivism variable (COL). In general, no change in the relationship between learning organization culture and organizational commitment when individuals were more individualistic they were more collectivistic.

Moderating effects on job satisfaction

Regression analysis were conducted to answer the question whether social patterns (measured by horizontal and vertical individualism and horizontal and vertical collectivism dimensions) moderate the relationship between the learning organization culture (measured by the seven dimensions of the DLOQ) and job satisfaction (measured by the MSQ intrinsic, extrinsic and overall satisfaction). Regression results indicate that there are no significant moderating effects of the social patterns on the relationship between learning organization culture and job satisfaction (intrinsic, extrinsic, cognitive and overall satisfaction). Thus, there are no significant interactions. To simplify the analysis, HI and VI were combined into one individualism variable and HC and VC were combined into one collectivism variable.

Discussion

The ALOQ organization culture results showed that respondents scored highest means with respect to LO7 (providing strategic leadership for learning) and scored least (but still statistically significant) for LO5 (establishing systems to capture and share learning). These results pointed to the levels of development and competitiveness of the banks at the leadership or organizational level. However, the group or team levels were not as developed. This might be due to the nature of banking service

operations. Service employees are usually trained to follow general directions from their supervisors (branch managers). Once employees receive the instructions, not much cooperation would be needed among peers thereafter or while serving customers.

Among the ALOQ learning organization culture seven dimensions and organizational commitment, Pearson coefficients of correlation scores were highest for 'providing strategic leadership for learning' dimension and lowest for 'promoting inquiry and dialogue' dimension. Again, this finding was consistent with the mean scores and could be attributed to the work nature of service employees in the five banks.

Results showed that employees were committed to a model where leaders supported and used learning strategically for business results. In addition, employees were more committed when they were involved in setting, owning, and implementing the vision of their bank with their management. They wanted to carry a part of the responsibility of decision-making and thus they were motivated to learn toward what they were held accountable to do. As such, employees were strongly motivated and committed and were able to see the effect of their work on the entire enterprise. At the same time, employees were more committed when their banks were more connected and linked to their communities. These findings corroborate a learning organization culture. Results showed that sharing, participating, and collaborating among employees at different levels proved critical for learning to occur at the organizational level, which is consistent with Watkins and Marsick's (2003) conceptual framework. This in turn resulted in higher commitment and satisfaction among employees.

On the other hand, employees were not as committed to the notion of ongoing education, nor were they committed to the ideas of working as teams or using groups to access different modes of thinking, which is a foundation of communities of practice (Wenger 2004). Unlike other cultures, Lebanese individuals are usually raised in a system where they finish their formal education first, and then go out to the field of practice to apply what they have learned. Thus, the ideas of ongoing education and growth within the work context are not familiar in the Lebanese context. At the same time, individuals are used to having an authoritative figure (instructor) who assumingly knows 'everything' and provides 'correct' information. As such, individuals are used to listening and take notes, and thus are not expected to collaborate and work together to discuss or challenge supervisors' ideas whether individually or in groups. The above results suggest that the type of organization might influence the learning organization culture. However, further examination of the organization type and learning organization culture is needed.

Another finding of this study is the impact of the learning organization culture on performance as a dominant outcome variable. Learning organization culture, job satisfaction and organizational commitment were highly correlated and these variables were mutually exclusive in concept and measurement. This finding reflects the view of existing literature that building a learning organization is pivotal in improving performance. Research studies support this notion and suggest that the existence of an organizational learning culture results in major performance outcomes (Egan, Yang, and Bartlett 2004) and strongly associated with employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wang 2005). Accordingly, the learning organization culture proved to be profound when studying organizational outcomes.

We would stress the need for a process of engagement, which is achieved through employee empowerment and strong leadership that responds to the interests and needs of the bank employees. Leaders need to motivate and encourage employees to think toward learning, work together towards learning, and have a shared vision toward success and pay attention to establishing systems that encourage learning. Leaders should reinforce the different dimensions that support a learning culture to advance performance outcomes in general.

Social patterns moderating effects

This study confirmed that whatever individuals' social patterns were, their preferences regarding learning, job satisfaction and organizational commitment did not change. This finding suggests that the model under study is universal. Another plausible interpretation is that satisfaction and commitment among service employees in the Lebanese banking sector are a function of the interaction of the individual learning and internal organizational environment and not the individual social preferences. Therefore, a good match between the individual and the organization was important in predicting commitment and satisfaction, but not so much for individualism and collectivism as moderator predictors.

Implications

This research could be considered 'emergent' and provide a roadmap on how to measure the learning culture in the Lebanese business context, how to move towards a learning organization model, and what relationships exist between the learning organization culture, organizational commitment and job satisfaction in an international context.

The study provides empirical evidence to help HRD practitioners be aware of the current organizational situation regarding the learning culture, organizational commitment and job satisfaction in order to improve these components in their organizations. It also helps them develop and sustain a culture conducive to learning and adopt it as a means of survival, of gaining competitive advantage and of success, as survival in today's world is for the 'fittest to learn' (Marquardt 1996, 1). In addition, this research can provide HRD practitioners, especially those in the banking sector, with information that might be very significant when preparing training programmes, standards and other professional development activities.

This study could also be significant in measuring employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the Lebanese banks. Based on the results of this study, the ALOQ can be seen as a crucial assessment tool for HRD practitioners that can be implemented in fields other than the banking sector. The instrument can also be utilized in other Middle Eastern countries with similar cultures and same Arabic language. Such an instrument is crucial in measuring the value obtained from sustaining a learning culture and in measuring business performance. These measurements provide understandings that are strategic to the organization and now possible. Thus, this research established the importance of a learning organization in a knowledge-based economy and in the creation, integration, use and transfer of knowledge in a different environment.

For researchers, this study contributes to the understanding of the learning organization theory and its link to performance outcomes in an international

context. Finally, this research can create an avenue for future research that will lead to improvements in the Lebanese corporate practice.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Translation of the survey instrument was one of the challenges encountered during the research study. This is especially true when there is no one appropriate terminology for specific terms used in the instrument, such as 'leadership' and 'organizational culture'. Moreover, this study was based on self-reported data, taking only the perspectives of service employees and their managers. Further research is needed taking into consideration the perspectives of other employees within the banks to minimize the limitations of self-reported data. In addition, this study included two outcome variables that could correlate significantly with each other. Focusing on alternative outcome variables such as customer service or organizational financial outcomes might be an alternative way to shed light at the relationships between learning processes and performance outcomes. This research may be replicated in different industries and work environments. In other words, applying the research design to other professions and cross-company comparison is another recommendation for future research to generalize the applicability of the dimensions of the learning organization culture in the Lebanese context. In addition, comparing differences found in the learning culture between domestic, regional and international settings would be an interesting study topic. This research could be replicated in different countries, such as Jordan, Qatar or UAE, as Lebanon and these countries have similar cultural backgrounds, and little research on the topic, if any, has been conducted in these countries. Finally, a different approach, such as an indepth qualitative study, is advised especially when focusing on specific variables.

Creating a learning organization will produce difficulties from the perspective of the conventional workplace. Reasons range from vagueness of the concept itself, to lack of resources, to resistance to change. This study argued that the concepts of working and learning coexist and benefit both employees and organizations. It proved that learning organization culture and performance outcomes correlate strongly in the Lebanese banking sector. It also proved that the learning organization, although vague as a concept, is applicable as a model and practiced by the Lebanese banking sector. This model can be transferred to other industries. In short, changing the status quo of the conventional workplace might produce problems, but will produce benefits as well.

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