

Theoretical Approach towards Internal Marketing and Customer-Oriented Behavior: A Developing World Perspective

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Abstract

Capitalizing on the evolutionary and multi-dimensional character of internal marketing (IM), this study adds two new factors: informational justice and developmental opportunities, to IM literature. Justification for their inclusion comes from the researchers elaborating IM from time to time and also partly from the theory of Social Exchange. Based on this background, this research attempted to develop a conceptual model seeking support of Social exchange theory and partial support of Equity theory and social identity theory. The model is drawn by looking at the peculiarities of higher education industry on how to bring customer-oriented performance or Customer-Oriented Behavior among faculty members. Present study incorporates mediating mechanism, organizational identification, deemed most relevant to influence customer-oriented behavior. With all the factors in place, the authors believe application of this model will be most useful for management of higher education institutions. Basically, it is a conceptual study of strategic nature, inviting scholars to follow the empirical path to authenticate the given model and extend the domain of internal marketing and customer-oriented behavior not only in public sector higher education but to other public and private service organizations.

Keywords:

Internal Marketing, Informational Justice, Developmental Opportunities, Customer -Oriented Behavior, Organizational Identification

Introduction

The world is changing or the world has already changed. Isn't it true that the sentences like world is changing have become a cliché. Go through decades old business talks and articles, this sentence would often greet you or heat you. Are we continuously in a spiral of change? Is the change country-specific or continent-specific or sector-specific or the globe-specific? Although, the process of globalization spans over centuries and 20th century offers two irrefutable but poignant instances of it: World War-I and World War-II, encompassing the whole world. Later on the advent of internet worked as a super-impetus force and the world experienced the concept of global village. This new wave of globalization championed by ICT (information &

communication technologies) steadily gained grounds, though much faster in developed countries than other parts of the world. First-time companies like Google and Facebook had customers crossing the threshold of billion on daily basis. However, something unusual has just struck the globe, it is Covid-19. The wave of Covid pandemic is much stronger considering the amount of time it took to spread. Only a year back this was unimaginable and now it is the greatest reality of our time. In the 21st century, it is the first event of its kind massively and sweepingly affecting the globe. Its effect goes beyond infection and fatalities of the people from all corners; with different countries/companies claiming to have developed vaccine; this pandemic is likely to rest in history. But certainly not its consequences! It is not that e-commerce giants have got an unparallel penetration; it has already transformed travel, business, and most importantly the modes of work.

One sector that has been less touched upon to discuss pandemic's impact is higher education. In fact, its functioning has already felt a thrust putting it on the path of transformation. Virtual universities are in existence since quite a while; but their mode has largely been monolithic and seldom interactive. This pandemic has forced universities out of no-option to switch line to the more interactive modes of learning using Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Zoom etc. Trial and error has worked wonderfully for the newbies (both faculty and students). Continuous experimentation has quite acclimatized them to this new mode of education. Those who were reluctant and suspicious at one point are increasingly absorbing it. Probably the fastest way to make people adopt a new technology is cease all the alternatives! Once the pandemic is over, it will truly pitch the higher education institutions on global platform where students will have choices they had never before as their will also be an online subscription option. If they are already exposed to online education it is jolly good and in the reverse case still according to social learning theory they will have multiple cues surrounding them to seek inspiration and comfortably adopt. On top of it you will not be required to move from your place. The troubling question is having that many choices why would students cling to an inferior choice? Why not embrace a university soaked in quality and has a greater acceptance in market. So, students interested to secure their careers will defect to quality giving universities. The enormity of challenges will build added pressure on universities apart from this defection. Talented faculty will also desert universities in conventional setups. The solution for universities is to be more customer-oriented for students on one side and on the other end be more faculty-oriented.

COB is a measure of how committed an employee is to

understand and meet expectations of customers and fully enjoys it (Babakus, Yavas & Karatepe, 2017). For true customer orientation there can't be anything more important than to be entirely at the level of customer's needs set and associated expectations. Yoo, Katsumata and Ichikohji (2019) say degree of customer orientation has a close association with customer concern; higher customer orientation conveys higher concern and lower customer orientation communicates lower concern. Customer-oriented employees will engage in those behaviors particularly aimed for value creation and developing relationship with customers (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015). According to Pousa, Hardie, & Zhang (2018), a visible shift is there in viewing marketing from a transactional perspective to relational perspective. Donovan, Brown, & Mowen (2004) contends service firms implement marketing concept through its service employees and the interaction they have with customers. For banks to stay competitive, their employees need to be customer-oriented (Sarungal & Nargota, 2017)

Internal marketing take employee as internal customer (Huang, 2020; Salamoura, Ntamposis, and Gaki, 2020, Tsiotas, Belias and Niavis, 2020) and so internal customer and employee will be interchangeably used throughout this article. According to Rafiq & Ahmed (2003), concept of internal marketing getting off in the mid 1970s (Berry, Hensel, & Burke, 1976; George 1977, Sasser & Arbeit, 1976); and then after many a debates and discussions challenging its position as an independent field is well into 5th decade of its existence (Nart, Sututemiz, Nart, Karatepe, 2019; Salamoura et al., 2020; Vel, Shah, Mathur, & Pereira, 2019). Its continued journey after all these long years is a testament to its growing acceptance in various corporate fields. However, still more needs to be done to prove its outcomes beyond a reasonable doubt if applied. Evidence pouring from multiple sides will of-course give it a cross-sector validation pushing everything controversial and confrontational behind. Internal marketing is credited for a number of attitudes and behaviors both at employee-level and customer-level; this is a feat uniquely attributable to IM.

Organizational identification is about the strength of association employee extends towards its employers in such a way that employee shows grave concern over the issues and goals meaningful to the organization (Ashforth, 2016; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Hernandez-Diaz, Calderon-Abreu, Amador-Dumois, & Cordova-Claudio, (2017) show IM though positively effects OI, but the impact is a weaker one. And the study by Gross & Rottler (2019) show IM has no influence on OI. They further remark that reason behind this missing link might be the

lack of contextualization of IM instruments to a certain sector. So the managers should try to fit IM according to the needs and motivation of its employee which may develop the link between the two. Following this recommendation, this study introduces two IM elements different from Gross & Rottler's (2019) study, as their IM instrument included (training, vision, and rewards).

Although there has been discussion about customer-orientation from the times of early internal marketing scholars (e.g. George, 1990; Gronroos, 1981; Gronroos 1985) and later on Rafiq and Ahmed (2000) and Ahmed, Rafiq and Saad (2003). For them IM should enable employees to be more customer-oriented. However, their discussion was only at conceptual level and lacked empirical aspect. Afterwards, there are empirical studies to link the two; and the noteworthy one included: Huag and Chen (2013), Nart et al.(2019),Park & Tran(2018),Wu, Tsai, and Fu (2013). These empirical evidences pertain to industries ranging from banking to hospitality but almost non-existing from higher education side. The primary reason being the controversial status of students; as researchers were generally shying away from calling them customers. So, first we address this question can student be called customer by exploring some very recent literature?

Student as Customer

Higher education is increasingly becoming more and more competitive industry (Guilbault, 2018, Khuwaja et al; 2019). Increase in competition has created challenges to recruit and retain students. This competition is pushing universities to follow other industries in implementing marketing strategies; an important condition for success (Guilbault, 2018). Doing research in higher education marketing is still considered a worthy exploration (Guilbault, 2018). A fallacy existing is students will be satisfied only if they get A grades. He says this is a flawed argument because it is based on customer is always right philosophies which is by no means universal in modern times not only for education but for other industries as well (Guilbault, 2018).Whosoever becomes a customer for organization has an influence in its policies and practices. Those institutions that do not view students as customers point a gap of customer orientation. This gap has implications and therefore should be investigated (Guilbault, 2018). Ip, Iong, Wu and Wang(2018) come forward with a more pressing argument to consider students as customers because it will give a rise to quality teaching, nurture more diverse talents and finally a greater contribution in the well-being of society. Institutions not viewing students as customers indicate a lesser customer orientation. This deficiency has implications and it should not be left unexplored (Guilbault, 2018). In the study of

(Khuwaja et al., 2019), they take student as customer to develop a market-orientation scale for public sector universities. Sahibzada, Jianfeng, Latif & Shafait (2019) also call teachers as internal customers for universities and students as external customers. Guilbault (2018) say the debate on status of student is discussed too much. Let this debate settle by declaring them customers; what the universities need to do now is to focus on aspects deemed important by any customer.

The performance of internal customer at higher education institutions needs attention (Atatsi, Stoffers, & Kil, 2019). Since higher education builds future generations and is a significant contributor in the development of a country (Abid & Khan, 2017; Lekchiri, Eversole, Hamlin, & Crowder, 2018), it should be a more researched area. So far, however, there has been little discussion on the role of internal marketing and organizational identification on customer oriented employee performance (Altarifi 2014; Asif, S. 2015;Gross & Rottler, 2019; Nart et al., 2019; Vel et al., 2019). The present study develops a comprehensive model with all these considerations.

Parent Theories

Theories supporting this study are Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) and Social Identity theory (Tjafel, 1974; Tjafel & Tumer, 1985). SET focuses on the exchange relationship developed with the initiation of a measure that has potential benefit for other party and the other party in response to it, pays back in the form of a measure valuable in the eyes of the initiator of the process. On the other hand, equity theory is of the view to have required outputs from employees organizational inputs should be of equal magnitude otherwise the outputs will diminish accordingly. SIT talks about human association with various reference groups to show off his/her worth to others. IM is an employee-centered management philosophy believing to do every right thing that may motivate employee and take care of his needs. Looking at IM from this angle, SET would call it a management action favoring internal customer so he/she will react favorably towards employer aspirations like job performance and organizational identification. Equity theory takes IM as a valuable input from employer to seek desirable outputs of organizational identification and performance of internal customers as more contributions mean no unjust demands of firm. Premise of SIT is, people like to identify in groups and their identification activates them to work for the cause of their identifier. Since internal customer performance is a big priority for organization, the identification will ensure he/she performs.

Literature Review

Customer-Oriented Behavior

COB emancipates an organization from the clutches of short-sightedness; employee thinks and acts beyond a sale. With COB, employee mentality is transformed and an uncommitted person becomes committed to customer. Saxe and Weitz (1982) pioneered the modern concept of customer-orientation of employees calling it the application of marketing concept to salesperson. Since then customer orientation has matured into a field mostly focusing on front line employees whether they are salesman or not. Hence, Pousa et al. (2018) defined customer-orientation is about applying marketing concept on the front-line employees interacting with customers. Frontline employee's active listening during interactions with customers and directing necessary effort to ensure their need satisfaction is what makes customer oriented behavior (Jung, Brown, Zablah; 2016). COB is not just to satisfy customers; it takes customer into the realm of loyalty. Pousa et al., (2018) further term customer-orientation as relational behavior; having inherent characteristic of building relationship with customers. A selling approach can never convince a customer to think about a deeper and longer relationship. The customer-oriented approach has not only a contrasting view to selling approach; it steps ahead of explicit demands of customer and try to uncovers long-term and unexplored needs (Moon, Hur, & Hyun, 2019).

COB is in fact best at looking after the strategic interests of customers; interests customers are unaware of. Students take on different careers in future and success of these careers greatly depend on how much their future was into the perspective of faculty while they were taught. That is why customer-orientation can prove truly potent in case of students. COB has the ability to generate positive relationship between service providers and their customers which subsequently turns into improvement in business performance (Balaji, Jianga, Singh and Jha, 2020).

Internal Marketing (IM)

In today's soaring competitive landscape, value-producing for internal and external customers is complicated because organizational longevity has its bases on this value (Mainardes, Rodrigues, & Teixeira, 2019). Companies should apply IM strategies to align their internal environment with external environment (Huang, Rundle-Thiele & Chen, 2018). It is customary for organization to expect best employee behaviors to outpace its peers. But these expectations blink and fell short of the mark. Park and Tran (2018) recommend a solution from their findings: before organizations put the onus of expectations on customers for positive responses to their offerings and

employees for customer-orientation in their dealing; it should first ensure internal marketing is in business. Internal marketing thus transcends the old marketing model; external customer taking a backseat to internal customer!

What makes IM distinctive from the rest of fields is its built-in flexibility. From the early days of its operationalization to most recent efforts there is a great deal of variety and apparently there seems no end. IM tools of Ahmed et al. (2003) included: physical environment, empowerment, senior leadership, strategic reward, incentive system, staffing, selection and succession, process changes, internal communication, inter-functional co-ordination and training and development. Jou, Chou, & Fu (2008) dimensions included: empathy & consideration, promotional activities, benchmarking, job quality, upward communication and information sharing. IM elements of Panigyrakis (2009) were: formal interaction, feedback, reward systems, internal procedures and policies and internal customer orientation. IM members of Huang et al. (2018) were: internal communication, internal market research and training. IM components of internal communication, internal value exchange and training were used in the study of Bermúdez-González, Sasaki, & Tous-Zamora (2016). IM consisted of: employee rewards, recruitment process, internal communication, empowerment and training in the study of Kanyurhi & Akonkwa (2016). Mainardes et al. (2019) represented IM with: empowerment, training and development, communication and reward system. Frye, Kang, Huh, & Lee (2020) took empowerment, relationship with managers, pay and work environment as IM elements. Few writers did try to present it in a holistic form to give it a unified meaning (eg. Foreman & Money, 1995; Ahmed et al., 2003). Their efforts were of little success as their IM measure got in the application occasionally while others continued developing and using self-created measures. Adoption of new dimensions in appearance is a rejection of earlier work of scholars and a setback for their achievements but it is not the case as it strengthens the evolutionary character of IM. All those labeling IM a one-dimensional construct are committing a mistake of oversimplification to a multi-dimensional construct Huang et al. (2018).

Although Boukis (2019) calls IM quite an outdated approach as it is a firm dominant philosophy and ignores the role of employee from the perspective of service dominant logic. He presents an IMO framework inspired by service dominant logic, giving employee an active part in value-creation process. But the scholar believes, it is the organization and its management that should be on the

driving seat to enable employee side for co-creation initiatives.

Considering the evolutionary, multi-faceted nature of IM (e.g. Huang, 2020) and the fragmented literature as described in above paragraphs, the author proposes two new dimensions to the domain of IM with justification in the paragraphs to follow. Following Fu (2013) IM will consist of two elements: developmental opportunities & informational justice.

Developmental Opportunities

Developmental opportunities concern itself with the kind of work an employee does. Simple question it tackles is: how much learning the work itself offers to a person and mundane content is minimum. His/her assignments are not of routine nature requiring ordinary skills. The job ensures he/she develops his/her abilities and competencies at work. Developmental opportunities play the role of intrinsic motivator Coetzer & Rothmann (2007). In today's out of box competition almost every employee from a number of fields avoids prosaic jobs that are non-contributing to his/her skills and knowledge sides, but it is of utmost relevance for knowledge-workers to have a work meaningful for their profession. This development opportunity gives employee an avenue to learn more and is effectively an ability-enhancer. Jobs offering no such incentives falls in the ability-stifler category. Hence, these opportunities ensure there is no under-utilization of skills and the core makes the reasonable portion of job. Work environment offering developmental opportunities will advance the level of employee effort and ability-dedication for the work (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2007). This kind of opportunity boosts his/her preparedness for job and he/she remains relevant to the professional area.

Development opportunities demand fervent attention of senior management. Wingerden, Derks and Bakker (2018) insist on the role of top management in acknowledging the significance of facilitating these opportunities can take things forward. All this is not a mere coincidence but a systematic effort of organization to meet the need of internal customer. Developmental opportunities has been employed as job resource by (Albrecht, Breidahl and Marty; 2018; Bakker, Demerouti, Tavis, Schaufeli and Schreurs; 2003; Hu, Schaufeli and Tavis; 2013; Wingerden et al.; 2018; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli; 2007 etc). But all these authors have used it in JDR model while the author is attempting to use it differently in the context of internal marketing. Since IM is neither fix in its composition nor dictates any restriction on inclusion of certain factors as discussed above; and instead invites to include whatever can satisfy internal customer needs and

motivate him as evident from the following definitions: "It is a philosophy that focuses attention on customer satisfaction and organisational productivity through continuous attention and improvement of the jobs that employees execute and the environment in which they execute them" (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p. 1180). Conradie (2011) also in her definition talks about training, developing and motivating employees for different organizational goals. Reinforcement theory calling behavior an outcome of consequences. If organization will not be keen on rolling out learning avenues for him/her; he/she will be least motivated to indulge in development behavior. This avoidance will mean he no longer grows to the changing requirements of job and instilling outdated knowledge to his students. So for arousing positive behavior, the organization has to come forward as a development facilitator argues reinforcement theory. Also Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) suggest IM to be an competency builder.

From the above definitions and discussions it is clear that IM makes no compromise on the jobs and also turns every page to develop and motivate employees to go after the mission and vision of organization. Therefore, development opportunities can join the IM members to further broaden and deepen its role and also reinforce its multi-dimensionality. Opportunity for development can be a conduit for organizational identification and customer-oriented performance because SET views the positivity of organization is reciprocated with positive behaviors.

Informational Justice

What this author is doing is proposing a more advanced version of communication called informational justice which is more concerned about the right timing and accuracy (Lee & Chui, 2019); relevance and truthfulness of information and proper explanation on procedural issues.

Justice ensures the rights of everyone are intact and no matter how powerful and influential a party/person may be the other person/party is not marginalized. Justice principle was designed initially for a harmonious working of societies and states in the early times of human civilization and then it was incorporated into organizations owing to the fact that these organizations are made up of people there is an essential need to borrow this concept into its functioning for a frictionless and grudgeless work environment. Starting from distributive justice and then branching into procedural justice and finally into interactive and informational justice. The final part of justice is the area of this scholarly endeavor. Every organization has a communication system designed for information sharing between its different constituents and

thus providing a vital connection link. Since communication remained an integral component of internal marketing and according to the four decade analysis of IM, Huang (2020) says internal communication is the most used element of IM mix. General communication does offer the quantity of information from formal sources but the real concern for employee is not the quantity but the quality of information. Hussain and Khan (2018) say informational justice put quality in communication exchanges between employees and managers. This is where informational justice intervenes, overriding the traditional top-down communication. Informational justice gets precedence over communication as the latter only deals with the quantity of information while former immerses into quality of information. Plethora of information rarely sparks any genuine interest of employee because he/she finds hard to establish a connection between his/her priorities and the data all around sent from higher offices. Benoit, Alejandro, Foreman, Chelariu, & Bergman (2019) call it honest information an organization/managers shares with employees is informational justice. Information which is truthful and justified called informational justice (Foster, 2010). So, truthful, honest, and justification for the acts of organization/managers also make it a better choice.

Inclusion of informational justice is certainly an advanced and improved version than those steeped in a standard communication system. The problem is not the communication from the top, the real issue is the informational justice. Giving information a central role prove there is a great appetite for information in the true sense and this is what the researchers recommend to put aside internal communication and replace it with wholesome and relevant informational justice.

As in marketing, communication is tailored according to the needs of target audience; informational justice also emphasize on personalization of information. Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) also recommend companies to segment their internal market and avoid flat messages as they are quite meaningless due to different set of needs. Broad messages widens the fissure between organization and its employees and sometime the worst outcome is confusion. All this merits inclusion of informational justice into IM stream and from SET perspective favorable moves of organization get a welcome response from employees.

Organizational Identification

Mael and Ashforth (1992) define organizational identification as "a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own"(p. 103). Hence, organizational

identification relates an employee to his organization in such a way that there is no distinction between them. It creates a distinctive bond with its employees. They fully absorb the identity of organization and openly accept and own its role in the area of its products/services. All the goods and bads of organization belong to them as well. Organization becomes a reference point for their own identity. Organizational identifiers feel their organization as extension of themselves; the praise and reze from others effect them at personal level (Bailey, Albassami, & Meshal, 2016). If we chose one word to precisely describe current job markets it would be none other than it is uncertainty. The current Covid-19 pandemic has already altered the rules of the game for employees and employers; putting the world into a chaos never known to known to the modern world in peace times. According to Tufan and Wendt(2020) in turbulent and uncertain times, speaking about identification may seem weird. But since in many ways it is helpful for the cause of organization; it has to be studied. Recently, He, Zhang and Morrison (2019) found corporate social responsibility also resorts on organizational identification to reach task performance and extra-role performance. Organizational identification has also recently been used as a mediator in IM related studies (Boukis, Kaminakis, Siampos, & Kostopoulos, 2015; Gross & Rottler, 2019; Hernández-Díaz et al., 2017).

Internal Marketing and Customer Oriented Behavior

Commitment of management is pivotal in implementing IM and customer-oriented philosophy. Wu et al. (2013) contends that support of management for IM needs to be enhanced for increasing employees' customer-orientation. Very first responsibility of managers is to be attentive to the needs of their internal customers and then emphasize and appreciate them for exhibiting COBs (Park & Tran, 2018). Employees should be cognizant of providing a quality service to customers. Their consciousness in this respect matters. Fu (2013) emphasize on the role of IM in instilling a customer-oriented mindset in employees. Employees get encouragement for COB seeing management pursuing internal marketing. IM practices stimulate employees to respond with COBs (Nart et al., 2019). There is a positive relationship between IM and customer-orientation for frontline employees working in TFT-LCD concerns in Taiwan (Wu et al., 2013). A significant and positive effect of IM on COBs in hospitality industry of Turkey (Nart et al., 2019).

As we said SET is the basis of this model which says good behaviors of one party don't go unanswered and the recipient party pays back in form helpful for the initiator. Organization uses IM to offer employees good job products and employees in response show COBs. Hence both parties

reach their ends. SET has been applied in the recent work of (Nart et al., 2019) linking IM and COB. SET as well as findings from previous research lead us to say that greater the IM perception in employees the greater will be there customer orientation:

H1: Developmental opportunities have a positive association with COB.

H2: Informational justice has a positive relationship with COB.

H3: IM has a positive relationship with COB.

Internal Marketing & Organizational Identification

IM initiatives can encourage attitudes such as organizational identification, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Hernández-Díaz et al., 2017). Bailey et al. (2016) findings were internal marketing indirectly (job satisfaction & organizational commitment are mediators) effecting on employee-bank identification. These mediators positively influence employee-bank identification. For volunteer work no association can be found between IM and Identification but job satisfaction in the same study mediates between IM and performance in the nonprofit sectors for volunteer jobs (Gross & Rottler, 2019). Branch managers of a retail bank were shown that their adoption of internal marketing increases employee levels of organizational identification (Boukis et al., 2015). Hernandez-Diaz et al. (2017) quote Kale and De (2013) for a dearth of empirical evidence on the link between IM and organizational identification. Exploration of literature endorses the point of view on a lack of studies. In the light of SET we can say IM practices will positively influence the identification feelings of employees. Hence:

H4: Developmental opportunities have a positive association with organizational identification. .

H5: Informational justice has a positive relationship with

organizational identification..

H6: There is a positive relationship between internal marketing and organizational identification.

Organizational Identification and Customer Oriented Behavior

According to Chhabra (2020) organizational identification has a critical role in defining employee-organization relationship. Amongst many similar organizations employee's own organization is of highest status in his/her eyes (He et al., 2015). OI represents desire of employee for a better performance to seek mutual benefits for organization and himself (He et al., 2015). In fact rganizational identification strengthens association of employee with organization and what weaves organization and the customer is COBs of employees. Findings of Anaza & Rutherford (2012) confirm that employees with high customer-orientation will go beyond performing their duties and will be enthusiastic devotees of serving customer needs. Wieseke, Ullrich, Christ, & Van Dick, (2007) contends organizational identification a powerful determinant of COBs and is more influential than psychological attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction and commitment) that were dominating in previous studies of customer orientation. Organizational identification and COB positively related (Anaza & Rutherford; 2012; Ferdous & Polonsky, 2014; Homburg, Wieseke & Hoyer, 2009; Wieseke et al., 2007). Social Identity theory (Tjafel, 1974; Tjafel & Tumer, 1985) also say that people identifying with a particular group are sensitive about its interests and well-being. Therefore:

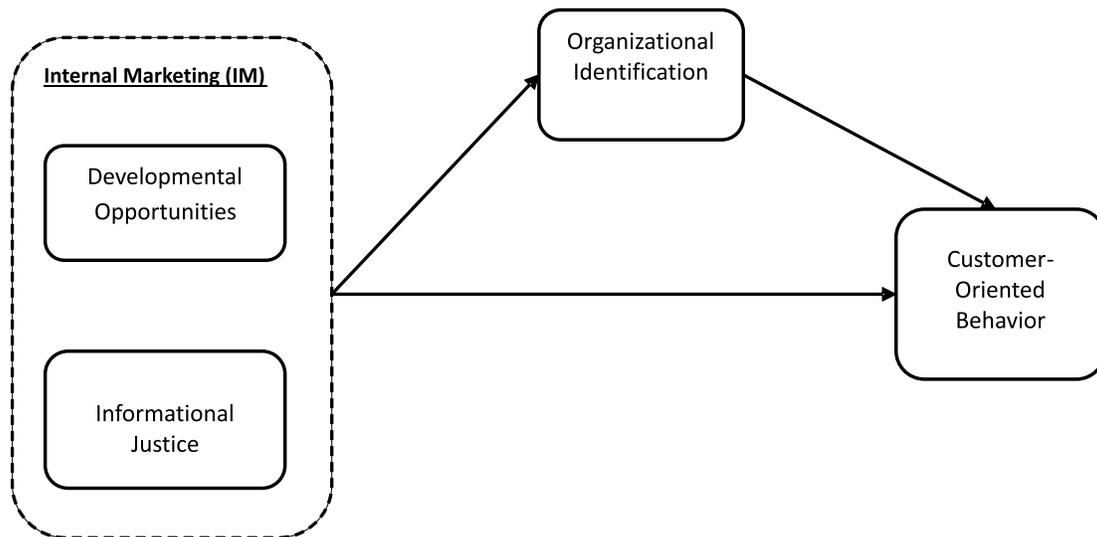
H7: Organizational identification has positive association with COB.

H8: Organizational identification mediates between IM and COB.

The proposed research model is on the next page.

Research Model

Figure: Proposed Research Model



Conclusion

Social exchange theory provides the required platform to show IM will have positive association with both organizational identification and performance of internal customer. Developmental opportunities are important for improving customer-oriented performance. Informational justice the other new entrant in IM world has a deterministic effect on organizational identification (Basar & Sigri, 2015). Informational justice has a significant correlation with employee performance (Tien, 2018). In the past IM has also been shown to positively affect organizational identification of employees (Hernández-Díaz et al., 2017). Organizational identification in mediation role is seen recently in studies of Gross and Rottler (2019) and proved its positive influence on performance. Overall, this model presents a parsimonious model for higher educational institutions and especially those in developing world to employ IM for addressing academic performance issues by considering the relevant mediating factor. Universities should implement this proposed model without a tinge of doubt to scale up the efficacy and efficiency of its internal customers.

Implications

Implications of the study are for academicians, researchers and practitioners. Academicians while teaching IM related

topics can update their students with this new development to broaden their concepts. Message for researchers is there is more space to expand the boundaries of IM and similar to this study they can contribute to the body of knowledge. Researchers can also empirically prove the veracity of this model; making it easier for practitioners to implement it. The current pandemic is causing great economic meltdown and public sector universities will face the brunt of likely budget cuts in coming years. Although this model lacks empirical underpinning yet the theoretical support it draws from various theories is probably sufficient to practically utilize it in higher education institutions. So, management at universities and watchdogs like Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, University Grants Commission of India can move for its implementation; as it does not add any financial burden on universities. Since putting IM into action is the call of many researchers as described in the literature review part of the study.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

This research is conceptual in nature and this is the greatest limitation of this research. Future researchers should test it empirically to substantiate its application. Primary audience for this model is higher education institutions, however, other industries can also replicate it. Organizational identification, commonly known as a

greatly researched area in general but way less explored in IM field, invites researchers to dig more into it for its wider acceptability in-connection with IM. Other than its holistic use, two of the newly introduced IM measures can also work separately, in combination with some other IM components to justify its accession to the IM clan. Further research on this particular model will also be an extension of the service profit chain idea.

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