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# THE EFFECTS OF ETHICAL MARKETING ON JOB SATISFACTION, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND INTENTION TO QUIT OF MARKETERS IN FAST-FOOD INDUSTRY

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**ABSTRACT:**

This study aimed at understanding the effects of ethical marketing on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit of marketers in the fast-food industry in Pakistan as the country has the eighth-largest fast-food industry in the world. The respondents of this study were both male and female marketers working in Karachi, Pakistan. A close-ended questionnaire was employed to gather the response from (n=391) marketers using purposive sampling. Through regression analysis using structural equation modeling, it was discovered that ethical marketing leads to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment and lower intention to quit. The study has important implications from the managerial perspective. Organizations should pay close attention to the ethical practices of their marketing staff because unethical behavior is not only detrimental for concerned individuals' job-related attitudes but also has long-term negative effects on organizational performance. This contribution is significant because most of the studies on this topic have either focused on employees in general, not particularly on marketers, or investigated industries other than the fast-food industry.

## 2. INTRODUCTION:

Unethical behavior at work has been a serious but constant business predicament for many decades. Whether it was Volkswagen which was embroiled in emissions cheating scandal (Jack, 2015) or Uber's false claims in an advertising campaign to recruit new drivers (Bensinger, 2017) or a recent Well Fargo's US$3 billion settlement for opening millions of fake accounts of its customers (Ivcevic et al., 2020), unethical behavior rby organizations and their employees is not limited to a specific time or place.

A working environment rigged with unethical actions negatively influences the effectiveness and efficiency of marketers (Hyman et al., 1990).Unethical business practices are crucial managerial problems and managers should play an active role in encouraging behavior that is ethical(Chonko et al., 2002; Hunt &Chonko, 1987).

A wealth of evidence indicates that being ethical results in better performance. Organizations that are considered by their workers as having higher levels off airness and integrity enjoy a much better average total return to stockholders compared to organizations considered as having lower levels off airness and integrity(Galvin, 2000).

Particularly, for sales and marketing employees, an ethical work environment plays a crucial part in determining their behavior and motivation (James & James, 1989). A salesperson who acts ethically with his customers ends up building a better and stronger relationship with customers which leads to customer satisfaction (Lagace et al., 1991; Robertson & Anderson, 1993).In 1983, a Gallup survey judging the ethicalness of various professions placed sales and advertising at the bottom and ranked it to be the least ethical (Poll, 1983).

Marketers are the face of the organization and typically they are the ones who confront the brunt of the consequences that result in unethical marketing. In such situations, these employees deal with unsatisfied customers and end up unsatisfied and demotivated themselves in the process.When the marketers experience such situations, the turnover rate of the firm is expected to increase. In case they do not leave the organization, they do not feel motivated and satisfied (LaMarco, 2018).

Moreover, Gilbert (2003) argued that when salespersons believe that the organization they are representing practices ethical behavior, this gives them a competitive advantage because customers or consumers incorporate the ethical reputation and integrity of the organization in their purchase decisions. Furthermore, when consumers perceive that a seller is associated with a firm having ethical practices then the customers are likely to consider the seller as credible and ethical (Mulki et al., 2006).

The fast-food industry has seen growth rates of 20% globally and Pakistan's fast-food industry is number eight in the world (Shah et al., 2019). This has created pressure on marketers to achieve sales targets, one way or the other, leading to unethical practices. Increasing competition and profit-seeking behavior have led to unethical marketing practices in the fast-food industry, hence, it is imperative to understand the impact of such practices on the work attitude of marketers. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess the effects of ethical marketing on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit of marketers in the fast-food industry. The study intended to understand how ethical marketing affects these work-related attitudes of marketers in this industry.

The present study was conducted in Karachi, Pakistan. Being the business hub and the largest metropolitan city in Pakistan, outlets and branches of all major fast-food chains are located in Karachi. The focus of the study was on the marketers who are involved in marketing, sales and advertising of services of fast-food restaurants.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Ethics in the context of marketing refers to that behavior where salespersons are mindful of customer well-being (Román & Ruiz, 2005). The sense of perceived rightness and wrongness of salespersons are important components of ethical marketing (Orville C Ferrell & Weaver, 1978). It also includes the well-recognized principles of honesty, full disclosure and fair play (Robertson & Anderson, 1993).

The ethics in marketing practices have been seen from two different perspectives. Firstly, the process of marketing where marketers are involved in unethical practices such as "bait and switch" and "push money". The second perspective is of the product where the product-related issues such as sugar-coated cereals and cigarettes are discussed(Laczniak et al., 1981).Victor & Cullen (1988)explained the notion of ethical environment as the predominant perceptions of typical corporate behaviors and practices that contain ethical components.

Literature on ethical marketing has been classified into three categories (Ferrell et al., 2013). Firstly, normative frameworks are rooted in philosophy and are used to develop models for decision making, scales for research, principles and norms(Laczniak, 1999). Secondly, the positive and descriptive models explaining managerial ethical decision making, business practices and organizational culture (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985). Thirdly, research and conceptual articles which are considered to be ethically responsible due to their intended consequences (Crittenden et al., 2011).

Pettijohn et al., (2008) have empirically reviewed the relationship of ethical behavior with intentions to quitand job satisfaction. Salespersons belonging to the retail industry were included in the study because they engage in roles traditionally faced by all types of salespersons and also come across challenges in the same manner. The results reveal that sales persons'perception of general business ethics and ethics of their employer is directly related to job satisfaction and inversely related to intention to quits.

Dinc and Huric (2017) have examined the impacts of ethical environment on job satisfaction of nurses and have concluded ethical climate directly affected overall job satisfaction. Evans et al. (2007), through a sample of 293 salespersons, discovered that particular dimensions of perceived business ethical environment impact job satisfaction and salespersons'performance. The work of Hunt et al., (1989)suggested a strong positive correlation between organizational ethical values and organizational commitment.

The work of Singhapakdi and Vitell (2007) reported two separate studies which drew from the samples of American Management Association of marketing professionals to examine the effects of institutionalization of ethics on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Their findings showed that institutionalization of ethics practices is strongly related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Research has also shown that the ethical environment is an important contributing factor of salespeople's organizational commitment and job satisfaction which are two main reasons of intention to quit(Babin et al., 2000; Valentine & Barnett, 2003).

When an employee thinks that his or her employer is being unethical it is expected that the employee would exit the unethical environment created by their organization(Pettijohn et al., 2008). This has also been supported by Levy & Dubinsky (1983)that working in an unethical environment can be challenging and frustrating for employees which results in high turnover.

According to the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), cognitive dissonance means the emotionally uncomfortable anxiety or psychological conflict that might have come due to holding incompatible thoughts at the same time, or from involving in behavior that contradicts with one's personal values (Oduh, 2016).

Basically, employees require consistency and uniformity between their moral and ethical beliefs and the ethical principles predominant in their jobs and workplaces (Schwepker Jr, 1999). Cognitive dissonance is defined as a stimulus or stressor which has adverse effects on work productivity(Grebner et al., 2003).Dozier & Miceli (1985) were of the view that inconsistency between internal values of ethics and ethical conduct produces a moral conflict. This inner conflict results ina cognitive dissonance which, as a consequence, impacts job satisfaction(Festinger, 1942).

Moreover, based on the theory of Festinger (1957), Mobley (1977) provided a conceptual model of cognitive or emotional dissonance that explains the path from job satisfaction to turnover intentions. He was of the view that intentions to quit are initiated by an individual's subconscious evaluation of the work environment. As a result of the assessment, the worker recognizes the aspects of the job that cause emotional dissonance and consequently, makes an attempt to get away from that work environment (Locke, 1969).

This study aimed at understanding the impacts of ethical marketing on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit. Klein et al. (2006)refer to ethical marketing as the behavior rwhich asserts visible, reliable and responsible procedures and practices that demonstrate honesty and transparencyto consumers and other stake holders.While defining job satisfaction, Spector (1985)has mentioned that it is an individual attitude towards how well one likes his or her job.

The term intention to quit has also been inter change ably used with phrases such as propensity to quit and turnover intention (Haque et al., 2019) and it has been described as a person's behavioral intention to leave his or her workplace(Haque et al., 2019b).

Following are the hypothesis for this study:
H1: Ethical Marketing leads to higher job satisfaction (JS) among marketers.

H2: Ethical Marketing leads to higher organizational commitment (OC) among marketers.
H3: Ethical Marketing leads to lower intention to quit(IQ)among marketers.

## 3. METHODOLOGY:

The study used the positivist paradigm and quantitative research methodology. This section includes information related to data, variables, sampling, inclusion criteria, etc.

The primary data for this study were collected through self-administered survey question naires.A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among the marketers in the fast-food industry and 391 usable questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 78.2%. Fincham (2008) argues that a response rate close to 60% should be the target of most studies. By this standard, this study has achieved a considerably better-than-average response rate. However, we do not have information regarding the individuals who did not respond, hence, we are unable to determine the non-response bias. We, thus, would express a word of caution regarding the generaliz ability and representativeness of the finding sof this study.

Only those respondents were included in the study who were working in the marketing, advertising, or sales departments of fact-food restaurants in Karachi for at least six months. Both direct and third-party employees were included. Also, both male and female employees were included as respondents. The non-probabilistic purposive sampling method has been used for this study which is an appropriate method of selecting cases that are suitable for this study.

Necessary procedural remedies (Viswanathan &Kayande, 2012) were taken to minimize common method bias (CBM) in this study (Jordan & Troth, 2020). In line with the recommendations of Spector and Brannick(1995), the following actions were taken to mitigate the effects of CMB: the scale of the instrument wass equenced in random-order; participants were guaranteed anonymity in order to moderate the inclination of participants to provide responses that are socially desirable and reverse coding was applied on certain items in the instrument.

Ethical Marketing (EM) was measured by a scale created by Vitell et al., (1993). The items in the scale were obtained from the code of ethics established by the world’s largest and most renowned marketing association, that is, American Marketing Association. The code of AMA has been created by a board comprising of experts and scholars who were supported by a team of marketers. The scale consisted of 25 items. The reliability scores of the items in the scale ranged from 0.67 and 0.87. The shorter INDSALES scale (Rutherford et al., 2019)has been used to assess Job Satisfaction (JS) which has been created by Churchill et al., (1974) and Comer et al., (1989). The scale is employed to assess the job satisfaction of employees working in sales. The scale consisted of 21 items with reliability scores ranging from 0.545 to 0.921.

Organizational Commitment (OC) was measured by a scale created by Meyer et al., (1993).This scale is considered the most accepted tool for measuring organizational commitment(Bar-Haim, 2019). The 18-items scale had a reliability score ranging from 0.74 to 0.88. Intention to quitis assessed(IQ) by the scale established by (Kelloway et al., 1999). The 4-items scale has a reliability of 0.76. The scale has been used in several studies(Bethge & Borngräber, 2015; Noor, 2004).

## 4. RESULTS:

This section of the article presents the results of the study. Table 1 below summarizes the demographic profile of respondents in the study:

**Table 1: Demographic Profile**

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Female | 135 | 34.5 |
| | Male | 256 | 65.5 |
| | Total | 391 | 100.0 |
| | | | |
| **Marital Status** | Married | 120 | 30.7 |
| | Single | 271 | 69.3 |
| | Total | 391 | 100.0 |
| | | | |
| **Age** | 18<=Age<=29 | 167 | 42.7 |
| | 30<=Age<=45 | 129 | 33.0 |
| | Age<45 | 95 | 24.3 |
| | Total | 391 | 100.0 |

Table 1 shows that out of 391 respondents, a total of 135 respondents were female and the remaining 256 respondents were male. A total of 271 respondents were single while the rest 120 were married. Moreover, 167 respondents were between the age of 18 to 29, the respondents who were between the ages of 30 to 45 were 129 and respondents with age more than 45 were 95.

The results of the descriptive statistics show the number of responses, mean values with range, standard deviation and skewness and kurtosis scores. The table shows the mean values of 3.347, 3.555, 3.139 and 2.363 for ethical marketing, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit, respectively. The table of descriptive statistics is presented in the appendix.
It is noteworthy that since the sample size is more than 200 (n=391) it is assumed that the data is normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

### 4.1 MEASUREMENT MODEL EVALUATION:

This study employed a two-stage method to diagnose the measurement model. In the first stage, two measures of internal consistency were employed to assess the reliability of the constructs. Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability index (CR) were used for this purpose. Reliability indicates that a measure or construct has internal consistency. A construct is considered reliable when various attempts at measuring the construct converge onthe same outcome (Zikmund et al., 2013).

In the second stage, convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model were analyzed. The outer loadings of the indicators were evaluated along with the average variance extracted (AVE). Loadings were found to be within the acceptable range, consistent with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2016). Keeping in view the weaknesses of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings method, heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was used to determine the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The values of Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability index (CR) and HTMT were within the acceptable range and are presented in Table 2:

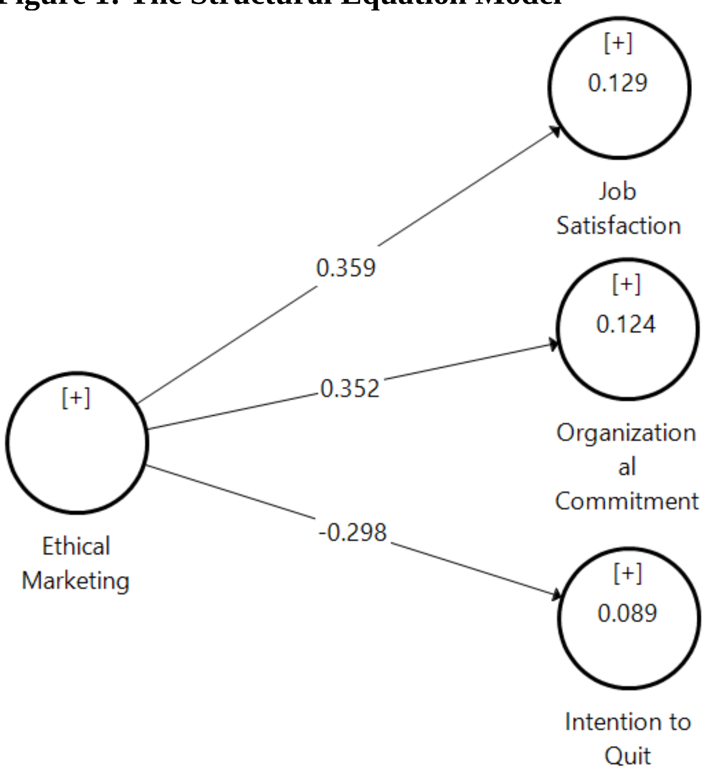
**Table 2: Reliability Scores and values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Measurement Model**

| | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability | (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethical Marketing | 0.900 | 0.906 | 0.710 |
| Intention to Quit | 0.799 | 0.869 | 0.624 |
| Job Satisfaction | 0.880 | 0.891 | 0.657 |
| Organizational Commitment | 0.896 | 0.910 | 0.561 |

## 4.2 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL:

After confirming that the constructs in the measurement model were reliable and valid, the assessment of the structural model was done in the next step. Collinearity was assessed before analyzing the relationship between variables and the predictive capabilities of the model. Since the values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranged between 1.389 to 1.799 for all the items there were no collinearity issues in the model. The structural equation model for this study is presented in Figure 1:

**Figure 1: The Structural Equation Model**



The assessment of the model was based primarily on two main indicators: the standardized path coefficients (β) which indicate the hypothesized relationship among variables in the model and the coefficient of determination ($R^2$ value) which is the measure of the predictive power of the model (Hair et al., 2016). Table 3 shows that the $R^2$for Intention to Quit was 0.089, 0.129 for Job Satisfaction and 0.124 for Organizational Commitment. According to Hair et al. (2012) andHenseler et al. (2009),in marketing research the $R^2$-values of 0.75, 0.5 and 0.25 indicate substantial, moderate, or weak relationships. Hence, all three variables in the model have weak predictive power.

**Table 3: Summary of $R^2$ and Adjusted $R^2$**

| Dependent Variables | R Square | R Square Adjusted |
|---|---|---|
| Intention to Quit | 0.089 | 0.086 |
| Job Satisfaction | 0.129 | 0.126 |
| Organizational Commitment | 0.124 | 0.122 |

Independent variable: Ethical Marketing

Table 4 shows the results of the structural model. Since $p < 0.001$for all the hypotheses hence all three hypotheses have been supported. The results have shown that Intention to Quit has been negatively associated with Ethical Marketing whereas Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment are positively associated with Ethical Marketing.

**Table 4: Structural model results and hypotheses testing summary**

| Hypotheses | Suggested effect | Path Coefficients | tValues | P Values* | Supported (p <0.001) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethical Marketing -> Intention to Quit | - | -0.298 | 6.049 | 0 | Yes |
| Ethical Marketing -> Job Satisfaction | + | 0.359 | 8.836 | 0 | Yes |
| Ethical Marketing -> Organizational Commitment | + | 0.352 | 8.576 | 0 | Yes |

*Significance level of 5%

## 5. DISCUSSION:

The study aimed to understand the effects of ethical marketing practices on important job attitudes of the sales workforce. On one hand, ethical marketing does not only promote customer wellbeing but also creates a sense of trust between the customers and the organization(Hansen & Riggle, 2009). On the other hand, ethical marketing brings further advantages suchas better job satisfaction, higher organizational commitment and consequently reduced turnover intentions. The results of the study are in line with several other studies which have studied the effects of ethical marketing on several variables including job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit (DeConinck, 2010; Jaramillo et al., 2005; Spector, 1985; Weeks et al., 2006).

The present research also validates the studies investigating the correlation between ethical practices and organizational commitment. Earlier studies explored this relationship for executives, scientists, procuringmanagers, and healthcare workers (Hunt et al., 1989; Sims & Kroeck, 1994).By constructing an ethical climate, companies might be able to lower unwanted turnover through better organizational commitment and eliminate undesirable marketers while concurrently promotinga customer-centered culture.

This study focused on the fast-food industry because Pakistan has a vibrant fast-food industry, with both national and multinational organizations, and ranks $8^{th}$ in the world (Shah et al., 2019). The study exhibited that ethical marketing has positive effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negative effects on intention to quit of marketers in the fast-food industry in this industry.

This study has contributed to the literature on ethical marketing practices and their effects on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and intention to quit of marketers in the fast-food industry in Pakistan. This contribution is significant because most of the studies on this topic have either focused on employees in general, not particularly on marketers, or investigated industries other than the fast-food industry.

From the managerial perspective, this study will help managers to better understand the implications of ethical marketing practices and how they translate into the work attitude of their marketers leading to better performance.

## 6. CONCLUSION:

The study has shown that ethical marketing is an important factor that has far-reaching effects on the job attitudes of employees in an organization. The results of the study have revealed that ethical marketing positively influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negatively influences intention to quit. The results further reveal that 12. percent variations in job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to quit can be explained by variations in ethical marketing. This study adds to the literature on ethical marketing and its consequences because the focus of the study was the fast-food sector which has not been studied before in this context in Pakistan.

Marketers play a crucial role in customer-centered businesses as salespeople are responsible to commence, create, and cultivate lasting relationships. Ethical values such as fairness, obligation, and dedication are essential for the growth of interpersonal marketing exchanges; hence, importance is given to ethical marketing behavior (Gundlach & Murphy, 1993).

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Like every other study, this research also faced certain limitations. One of the main limitations of the study was that data were only collected from Karachi, Pakistan. However, Karachi, being the financial hub and the largest metropolitan city in Pakistan, houses people from all parts of the country. Hence, it is believed that sample data have included people from other parts of the country. Moreover, the study used a purposive sampling method and could not use a probabilistic sampling method to achieve generalizability. Furthermore, a bigger and diversified sample from different social classes and cultures might improve the generalizability of the results.

The study has important recommendations both for researchers and practitioners. From the future research point of view, it is recommended that other variables such as sales target should also be included in the model to better understand the effects of ethical marketing on marketers. It is also suggested that marketers may also be categorized into executives/managers and non-executives/non-managers to further understand the phenomena. Moreover, from the managerial perspective, based on the results of this study, organizations should pay close attention to the ethical practices of their marketing staff because unethical behavior is not only detrimental for concerned individuals but also has long-term negative effects on organizational performance.

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**Appendix:**

Table: Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Ethical Marketing | 391 | 1.6 | 4.4 | 3.347 | .8106 | -.705 | .123 | -.991 | .246 |
| Job Satisfaction | 391 | 1.6 | 4.5 | 3.555 | .7168 | -1.167 | .123 | .140 | .246 |
| Organizational Commitment | 391 | 1.4 | 4.5 | 3.139 | .8116 | -.198 | .123 | -1.268 | .246 |
| Intention to Quit | 391 | 1.0 | 5.0 | 2.363 | .9103 | 1.115 | .123 | .439 | .246 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 391 | | | | | | | | |