MODERATING ROLE OF LEADERS' PROCLIVITY AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INTERNAL MARKETING AND EMPLOYEES' JOB ATTITUDE

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ABSTRACT

Leader's proclivity and strong internal communication have manifold effect on the relationship between management and the employees. Employee's attitude towards work gets affected by effectiveness of initiatives on the part of management to solve their problems. In this context, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the impact of internal marketing on employee's job attitude (job commitment and job satisfaction). Further, the moderating role of leader's positive proclivity between internal marketing and job commitment is evaluated. In addition, moderating role of internal communication between internal marketing and employee job satisfaction is also evaluated. Ninety seven non-teaching supporting staff members working in various departments of University of Jammu are approached. The data are analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) research technique. Results reveal that internal marketing significantly and positively affects employees' job satisfaction and commitment. This research paper contributes to the internal marketing literature by presenting the interaction effect of leaders' positive proclivity and internal communication with internal marketing. Overall results support that leader's positive proclivity and internal communication moderates the positive relationship between internal marketing and employees' job attitude (commitment and satisfaction respectively) in higher educational sector.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Leaders' Proclivity, Internal Communication, Job Commitment, Job Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Internal marketing includes all those practices that offer job related benefits to employees by providing continuous development, motivation, and satisfaction of their needs (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Among various marketing approaches, internal marketing is the strongest practice and initiative by the management that helps in retaining and increasing the level of commitment of the employees (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Employees' perception of organisational support (an element of internal marketing) helps in reducing their job related stress and gaining their commitment (Saadeh & Suifan, 2020). High level of commitment on the part of employees reduce employees' burnout, employees' turnover, anger, anxiety (Dinc et al., 2020) and helps in increasing their performance (Setiawati & Ariani, 2020). On the other hand, job satisfaction is also found to influence performance of the employees. Low satisfaction among employees reduce their motivation for performing high-quality work and employees remain absent from work (Gruneberg, 1976). Internal marketing strategy works as a successful tool in changing employee attitude appropriate for establishing service culture in the organisation (George, 1990).

Internal marketing offers quality services to its external customers by promoting service culture in the organisation through continuous commitment and satisfaction of the internal customers (employees) (Joseph, 1996). In addition to employee's job related outcomes, attitude of higher authorities (i.e. leaders) influence employees' ability to perform organisational functions effectively and efficiently. Leader's attitude (leaders' proclivity) towards their followers reflects effectiveness of various approaches used by them in handling employees' related issue. Leader's positive attitude assists learning in the organisation and helps in balancing instability at work place caused due to external or internal environmental pressures (Srivastava & Frankwick, 2011). Whereas, leader's negative reaction, victimising attitude creates injustice in the organisation and brings negative consequences for employees and the organisation (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). In addition to leaders' attitude, communication opportunities and effectiveness of communication platforms play vital role in influencing employees' attitude (Willman et al., 2006; Dedahanov et al., 2016). If correct information flows through effective communicative platforms, favourable reactions and positive work attitude are observed from employees at the time of crisis or critical situations at work place (Jin et al., 2020). Therefore in order to keep pace with growing demands of today's competitive environment, it is very important to adapt to the changing environment. To sustain competition, it is necessary to gain employees commitment and higher level of satisfaction through effective internal marketing practices, right attitude of leaders and proper communication platforms for employees. Therefore, the present study contributes and extends existing literature by proposing conceptual framework examining the moderating role of leader's

proclivity and internal communication between internal marketing and job satisfaction, and job commitment relationships in higher educational sector (Figure, 1).
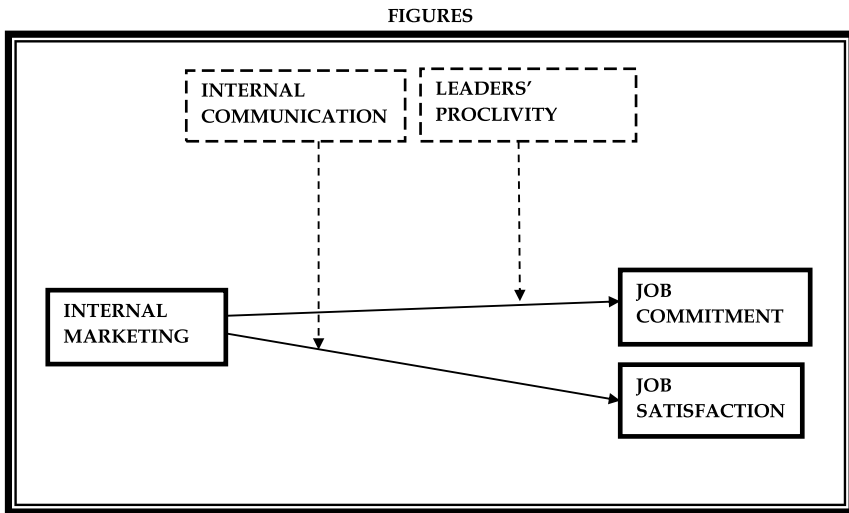
FIGURES

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

INTERNAL MARKETING AND JOB COMMITMENT

Employee's job attitude reflecting strong desire, willingness and confidence to make sacrifices on one's part for maintaining stability and positivity in the organisation is referred to as commitment (Anderson & Weitz, 1992). Employee's job commitment is reflected through its emotional attachment, involvement and identification with the organisation (Nikbin et al., 2010). Internal marketing practices including top management support, business processes, cross-functional coordination (Hernandez-Diaz et al., 2017), welfare system, training, compensation, communication, management support (Kim et al., 2016), information sharing, and vertical communication between managers and subordinates positively and significantly affect job commitment among employees (Bermudez-Gonzalez et al., 2016). Researchers such as Bennett & Barkensjo (2005); Chen et al. (2015) also studied positive association between internal marketing and job commitment. Internal marketing and commitment relationship has also been confirmed in different sectors such as hospitals (Al-Borie, 2012; Lim et al., 2016), banking sector (Bailey et al., 2016); teaching sector (Dokuzoglu & Eren, 2020). Internal marketing improves employees' job involvement, job satisfaction (Ting, 2011), and organisational identification (Hernandez-Diaz et al., 2017), which in turn reduces their intention to leave (Kim et al., 2016), and ultimately secures their job commitment. So, the following hypothesis is framed:

Hypothesis 1: Internal marketing significantly affects employees' job commitment

INTERNAL MARKETING AND JOB SATISFACTION

Employee's job satisfaction is a condition in which employees feel strong and positive association with one's job due to pleasure in overall job and work experiences (Curry et al., 1986). Job satisfaction is reflected through employee's strong positive emotional state and affective state (Locke, 1976; Isen & Baron, 1991). Further, Rony & Suki (2017) confirmed the positive impact of internal marketing practices including extrinsic leadership, internal communication, and training and development on employee job satisfaction. Many researchers such as Gounaris (2008); Huang & Rundle-Thiele (2014); Kanyurhi & Akonkwa (2016); Hernández-Díaz et al. (2017) also confirmed positive association between internal marketing and job satisfaction.

Organisations that have satisfied employees in terms of their jobs because of strong internal marketing practices yield positive organisational outcomes in the form of excellent performance (Hwang & chi, 2005; Kanyurhi & Akonkwa, 2016), and organisational identification (Bailey et al., 2016; Hernandez-Díaz et al., 2017). Recently, Al-Hazmi (2020) proved that strong policies and procedures adopted by University positively lead to staff members' job satisfaction. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2: Internal marketing significantly affects job satisfaction

INTERNAL MARKETING, LEADERS' PROCLIVITY, AND JOB COMMITMENT

Leaders' proclivity refers to attitude adopted by leaders towards their followers. Leader's proclivity is reflected through various styles, behaviours and ways in which leaders respond (positively or negatively) to various issues concerning employees. Negative attitude of leaders towards their followers (avoiding employees, negative beliefs about them) hampers their performance (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Positive leader's attitude reflecting friendly behaviour and encouraging attitude positively influence employee's attitude (Venkataramani et al., 2016). In successful organisations leaders present at all the levels of the organisation make use of various tools of internal marketing such as empowerment, participation, communication, knowledge sharing to influence behaviour of employees in positive direction (Davis, 2001). Leader's proclivity in the form of achievement oriented styles and participative styles help in creating positive organisational environment that supports internal marketing implementation (Mat, 2008). Studies such as Bell et al. (2004); Gounaris (2006) have examined a strong connection between positive leadership's attitude and internal marketing. Akbari et al. (2017) proposed transformational leadership style can effectively codify internal marketing tools to fulfil employee's needs and requirements.

Further, researchers such as Voola et al. (2003) confirmed the impact of transformational leader's style in influencing positive employees' behaviour through implementation of various tools of internal marketing such as reward system. Authors added that some leaders use internal marketing approach for providing constant intellectual stimulation, inspiration and motivation to their followers to persuade them to adopt positive work attitude. Wieseke et al. (2008, 2009) confirmed indispensible role of leader's positive attitude in successful implementation of internal marketing practices by creating shared organisational identity among the followers. Creating organisational identity help leaders in the management of work related behaviours of their followers which is the ultimate goal of internal marketing initiates.

The positive association between internal marketing and the employees' job attitude i.e. organisational commitment is supported by Caruana & Calleya (1988); Huang & Chen (2013); Bailey et al. (2016); and Kim et al. (2016). Further, Thomas et al. (2006) proved that organisations where management positively respond to employees' need for communication, flexibility, learning and growth has positive effect on commitment of the employees towards the organisation. Recently, Kim & Beehr (2018) also examined that leaders that adopt positive attitude towards their subordinates by using internal marketing tools such as empowerment secures affective organisational commitment. Therefore, it can concluded that leaders' proclivity in combination with internal marketing practices influence employees' job attitude i.e. job commitment. On the basis of discussion following hypothesis is framed:

Hypothesis 3: Leaders' proclivity moderates the relationship between internal marketing and employees' job commitment

INTERNAL MARKETING, INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, AND JOB SATISFACTION

Internal communication refers to the flow of information, views, knowledge within the organisation through various mediums such as suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, project teams, joint consultation, regular meetings with staff, and employee attitude surveys (Dundon et al., 1999).

Many researchers such as Ferdous (2008); Finney (2011); and Schuller & Chalupsky (2011) provided an integrative approach of internal communication and internal marketing practices in influencing employees' positive outcomes. In this context, Ferdous (2008) proposed that appropriate communication channels, application of internal marketing tools (such as training, empowerment, development, motivation) and evaluating internal marketing success through proper feedback together influence employee's attitude by gaining their commitment and trust. Many researchers such as Al-Borie (2012); Chen et al. (2015); Bailey et al. (2016); and Al-Hazmi (2020) confirmed that internal marketing policies and practices positively influence employees' satisfaction. In addition, Van Vuuren et al. (2007)

viewed that management's positive initiatives reflected in the form of regular sharing of information and receiving feedback from employees increase their level of satisfaction. Internal communication assist management in adopting internal marketing practices for influencing employees' attitude and for adopting measures for their well being and job satisfaction (Azadedel & Shokri, 2019).

Therefore, it can be concluded that internal marketing initiatives combined with effective channels of communication aimed at proper and timely informational flow can increase the level of job satisfaction among employees. So, the next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4: Internal communication moderates the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling Procedure

The present study is conducted in the higher educational sector. This sector is considered as most appropriate for the study as it is found to have tall hierarchical structures, institutional regulations, and norms that restrict free flow of information (Akin & Ulusory, 2016). In this sector, faculty members are not encouraged to communicate about the prevalent organisational issues and concerns more openly (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2019).

Weak organisational practices, negative attitude of leaders in the form of interpersonal mistreatment and favouritism makes employee's attitude passive (Jena et al., 2017; Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Since, higher educational sector is considered as reputed and prestigious platforms to work, role of strong management's initiatives in the form of internal marketing can assist employees in delivering their best by creating continuous growing and learning atmosphere in the institution. In order to evaluate the role that leaders' proclivity and internal communication play between management's initiatives and job attitude of employees, the study is conducted among non-teaching staff members of University of Jammu following purposive sampling. To assure representativeness of the sample, 30 different departments were contacted. 133 non-teaching staff members responded back. On the basis of completely filled up questionnaires and after deleting outliers, 97 out of 133 (72.93%) supportive non-teaching staff personnel (directly or indirectly connected with academics work) were found apt for further consideration.

Non-teaching staff members at all the levels (senior as well as junior levels) were contacted for assessment of their views and perception regarding internal marketing practices, HOD's attitude/proclivity towards them, communication patterns in their respective departments and their job attitude.

MEASURES

Study variables, namely internal marketing, leaders' proclivity, internal communication, job satisfaction and job commitment are measured using 5-point Likert scale, where 1 denotes strongly disagree and 5 denotes strongly agree. Internal marketing is measured using 15-items Foreman & Money (1995) standardised scale. Five items each from three dimensions of internal marketing, namely development, reward, and vision are extracted. 5 items each from leader's proclivity/attitude, internal communication, job satisfaction and job commitment are evaluated from Vakola & Bouradas (2005) standardized scale. The sample item of development is "Development of knowledge and skills is considered as an investment rather than a cost in your department". The sample item of reward is "Your efforts are rewarded or appreciated in your department"; and the sample item of vision is "You are well communicated your institution's vision". Sample item for measuring head of the department's (HOD's) attitude/proclivity is "If you disagree about departmental issues, you will not be considered as troublemaker by the HOD". The sample item of internal communication is "Changes in the department are communicated adequately to you".

The sample item of job satisfaction is "You are satisfied regarding training opportunities provided in your institution". The sample item of commitment is "You feel proud to say that you work in the present department". All items used in the study are amended as per the requirement of the non-teaching staff members in higher education sector (see appendix).

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to examine relationships among study variables and the manifest variables, partial least squares (PLS) technique is used. PLS (structural equation modelling approach) is used to measure factors and test composite models (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). Wong (2013) recommended PLS research technology as an appropriate tool for measuring small sample size, which is 97 (non teaching supporting staff) in the present study. Sample size is above 52 so it is deemed appropriate for conducting analysis using PLS research technique (Wong, 2013). Further, the study objectives are accomplished by preparing four models. The first two models measure direct relationship between internal marketing, and job commitment and satisfaction (Figure 2, 3). The third model shows moderating role of leader's proclivity between internal marketing and job commitment (Figure 4). The fourth model represents the moderating role of internal communication between internal marketing and job satisfaction (Figure 5).

In order to examine whether results are reliable or not, Cronbach's alpha values of all the constructs are checked as recommended by Nunnally & Bernstein (cited in Henseler et al., 2016, p.10). Reliability of the all the scales is checked with the help of Cronbach's alpha (>0.70) and composite reliability (>0.50), whereas validity is

checked through standard regression weights (SRW>0.50) values and average variance extracted (AVE>0.50). The value of Cronbach's alpha for the construct leader's attitude, internal communication, internal marketing, job commitment and job satisfaction is 0.80, 0.92, 0.85, 0.83, and 0.86 and composite reliabilities are 0.84, 0.94, 0.92, 0.86 and 0.95 respectively. All other measures mentioned above are within threshold limits. In order to confirm whether all constructs are different from each other discriminant validity of all constructs is evaluated and results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Discriminant Validity and Correlation Analysis

	IM	LP	IC	JC	JS
IM	.55				
LP	(.065) .256*	.58			
IC	(.088) .298**	(.0003) .018	.67		
JC	(.061) .247*	(.015) .123	(.271) .521**	.56	
JS	(.442) .665**	(.114) .338**	(.063) .251*	(.090) .301**	.62

Note: Values on the diagonal axis represent Average Variance Extracted and values in parenthesis represent squared correlation between the constructs. The values below the parentheses are correlation values.

** p<0.01, p<* 0.05

RESULTS

Results indicate that internal marketing has positive and significant impact on job commitment, with path coefficient of 0.247. This leads to acceptance of the first hypothesis. Internal marketing accounts for 6% of variance in job commitment (Figure 2; Model 1). Second hypothesis aims at evaluating the impact of internal marketing on job satisfaction. High and significant value of internal marketing and job satisfaction relationship depicted by the path coefficient (SRW=0.665) leads to the acceptance of second hypothesis. Internal marketing explains 44% of variance in job satisfaction (Figure 3; Model 2). Further, the results of moderating variables are also analysed in addition to the main effects using PLS technique. PLS is considered as a more superior and accurate method for evaluating interaction effect. PLS technique gives correct estimation of interaction terms of path coefficients and does not rely on distributional assumptions or estimation of standard error (Chin et al., 2003). The present study uses product indicator approach using PLS to ascertain the moderating effect of leader's proclivity and internal communication by creating new moderating variables, which is the product of independent and moderator variables.

Moderation between the study variables gets proved if the relationship between interaction term with the outcome variable is significant (Chin et al., 2003). Therefore, third hypothesis aims at evaluating the moderating impact of leaders'
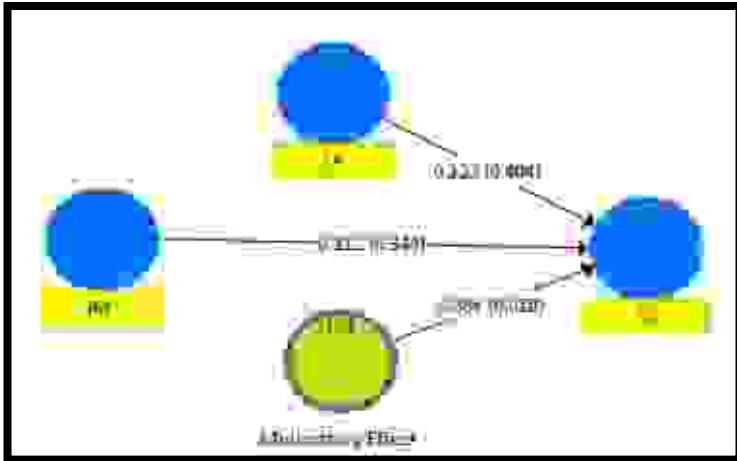
positive proclivity on internal marketing and job commitment relationship. High and significant interaction effect confirm the moderating effect of leaders proclivity in the above relationship (SRW=0.384, p=0.010, t=2.565). Similar approach using PLS is followed to evaluate the interaction effect of internal communication between internal marketing and job satisfaction relationship. Results show that moderation effect is significant and positive in this case also (SRW=0.382, p=0.003, t=2.986). Therefore, hypothesis third and fourth also gets accepted (Figure 4, Model 3); (Figure 5; Model 4). In addition to this, moderation effect of leaders' proclivity and internal communication is also checked through simple slope analysis. Results of simple slope analysis reveal that leaders' proclivity strengthens the positive relationship between internal marketing and job commitment. Also, internal communication strengthens the positive relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction. Results of simple slope analysis are presented in figure 6 and figure 7.
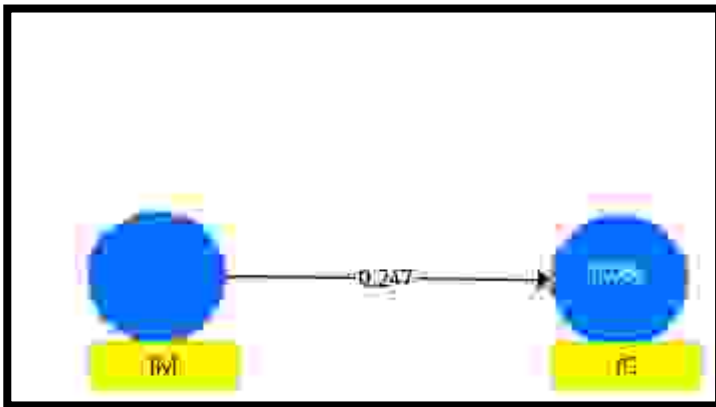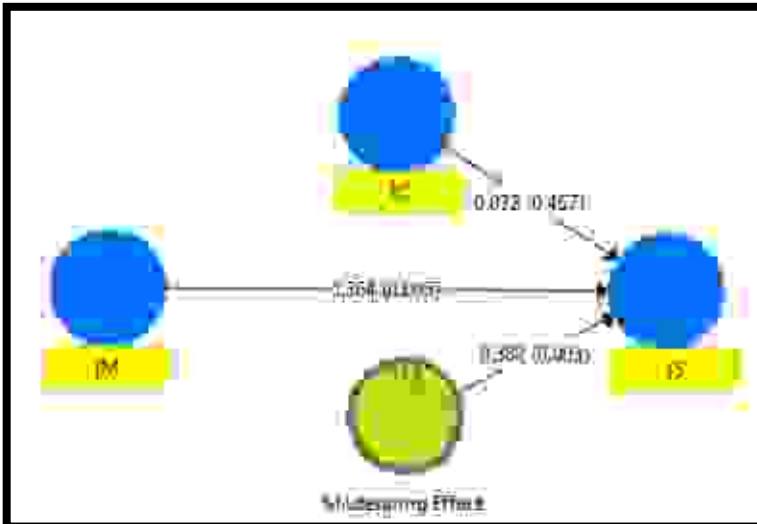

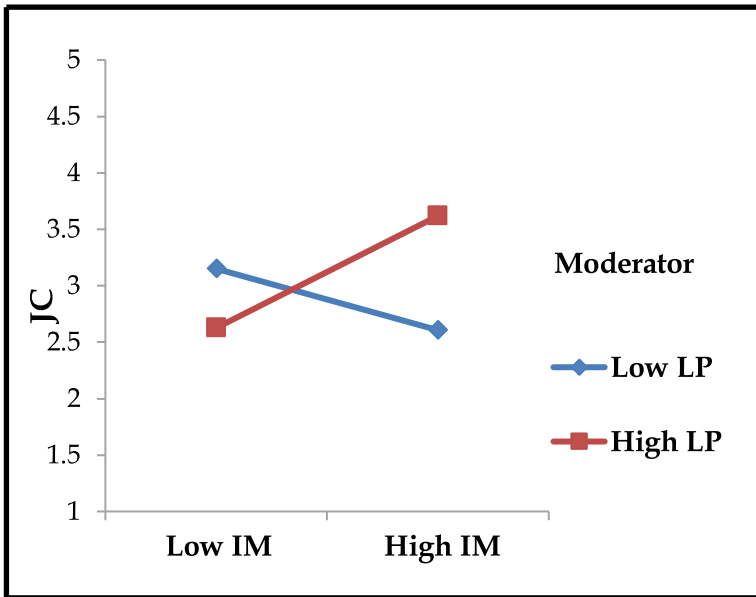*Note: IM= Internal Marketing, JC= Job Commitment*
Figure 2

Note: IM= Internal Marketing, JC= Job Satisfaction
Figure 3

Note: IM= Internal Marketing, JC= Job Commitment, LP= Leaders' Proclivity
Figure 4
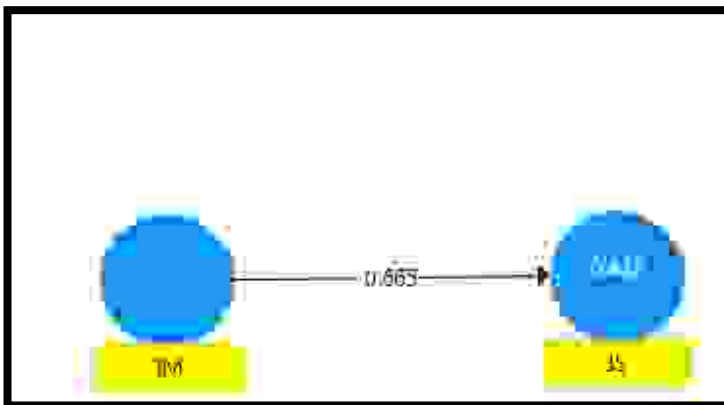
IM= Internal Marketing, JS= Job Satisfaction, IC= Internal Communication
Figure 5

Note: IM= Internal Marketing, LP= Leaders Proclivity, IM= Internal Marketing
Figure 6: Simple Slope Analysis

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The major objective of the study is to understand how effectively internal marketing can influence employees' job attitudes (job commitment and satisfaction) in higher education sector by hypothesising moderating role of leaders' proclivity and internal communication. Results of PLS revealed that the relationship between internal marketing and employees' job commitment is strengthened in the presence of high positive leaders' proclivity.

In addition to this, internal communication is found to strengthen the impact of internal marketing on employee's job satisfaction. Results of direct relationships revealed that employees' job attitude in terms of job commitment is less in comparison to job satisfaction. This reflects that somewhere higher authorities need to work in the direction of improvement of internal marketing policies and programmes which can secure commitment of employees towards the organisation. More initiatives, practices and programmes such as career planning, succession planning etc. are required to be introduced by the higher authorities so that employees remained more committed towards their organisation.

Further, analysis of moderation effect of leaders' (HOD's) proclivity and internal communication in influencing internal marketing and employees' work place attitude is evaluated. Moderation of internal marketing with internal communication helps in improving employee's job satisfaction. Management

through internal marketing practices such as seeking employee suggestion, listening to their concerns, regular feedback, handling complaints, positively influence their job satisfaction (Huang & Rundle-Thiele, 2014). Internal communication assists management in promoting internal marketing practices that can actually make personal feedback, sharing of information, suggestions from employees possible (Carriere & Bourque, 2009).

Moreover, managers provide regular feedback and receive information from employees and assure their regular involvement in important matters only through effective internal communication system which helps in promoting their job satisfaction (Orpen, 1997; Van Vuuren et al., 2007). Internal communication leads to organisational effectiveness by channelizing information freely between management and employees which together improves employee satisfaction (Jacob et al., 2016). Past research also confirms that leaders' positive attitude in the form of encouragement to practices that assist employees to share openly, and freely creates congenial work environment in the organisation and secures their commitment (Thomas et al., 2006). In addition, leaders' positive proclivity help in winning the trust of employees in organisational internal marketing practices such as empowerment, vision, training, role clarity, reward system and feedback system and secure their commitment. Leaders positive attitude (in the form of fair treatment, positive responsiveness towards employee's needs for communication, flexibility, learning and growth) combined with management's promotion of internal marketing practices (such as employee empowerment, involvement, interpersonal communication) creates positive perception of employees, secures their trust and ultimately makes them committed towards their job (Orpen, 1997; Thomas et al., 2006; Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008; Kim & Terry, 2018). Therefore, interaction effect of leader's proclivity and internal communication with internal marketing helps in influencing employee's positive attitude. Therefore, it is suggested that those responsible for the development of internal marketing measures i.e. head of the department (HODs' in our case) must adopt positive proclivity towards the non-teaching staff members by encouraging them to express their views regarding department issues. Further, higher authorities must introduce programmes that ensure maximum participation of employees in the form of their free expression of voice.

HOD's should not get indulged in negative beliefs regarding their subordinates. For instance, supportive staff members are troublemakers and untrustworthy. Higher authorities should not force their decisions, discard employees' important suggestions, and suspect their loyalty. Formal meetings should be arranged for non-teaching staff members on regular basis and they should not be threatened if they show their disagreement over the departmental issues. Internal communication system (formal and informal discussions) in the institute should be encouraged making provisions for employees' participation. Changes in the department should be immediately communicated to non-teaching staff members

along with teaching ones. Further, to improve employees' satisfaction and commitment towards their job and the organisation, higher authorities should make sure that their subordinates are able to coordinate their personal goals with the organisation's goals. Moreover, efforts should be made by the HOD's to provide conducive work environment that provide adequate training opportunities, rewards, empowerment to employees. Internal market research should be conducted on regular basis for improving the overall satisfaction and commitment level of the subordinates.

LIMITATION & FUTURE RESEARCH

The first limitation of the study is that the results cannot be generalised in other sectors because it evaluates study variables in restricted educational setting of North India. In future, research can be conducted in other sectors as well. The second limitation of the study pertains to its cross sectional nature which can be eliminated by conducting longitudinal study in future. Small sample size is the third limitation of the study. In future results can be analysed using large sample and more analytical techniques using SEM (Structural Equation Modelling). The forth limitation of the study is that responses of only non-teaching supporting staff members are evaluated through distributed questionnaires. Future study can extend research by incorporating higher authorities, and teaching staff members as well. The fifth limitation is that the present study examines the impact of few internal marketing practices in influencing employee's attitude. In future more practices under internal marketing can be incorporated such as empowerment, internal market research, development, selection, and management support. In addition to leader's proclivity and internal communication moderators in the present study, future research can incorporate more moderators like job engagement and internal networking. They can also evaluate mediators between internal marketing and employees' attitudinal outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Leaders are responsible for the success of the organisation and absence of their appropriate attitude towards the members can lead to failure of the organisation. Failure on the part of leaders in addressing employees' suggestions, concerns; and failure in sharing of important information encourages unfair management practices at work place (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005; Jones & Kelly, 2014). Success of organisation also depends upon effectiveness of organisational practices in the form of internal marketing which takes place through communication channels, adequate information, and supportive attitude of management (Allard-Poesi & Hollet-Haudebert, 2017). Failure of positive leader's proclivity and internal communication creates a dead effect in the organisation's practices and initiatives by losing employees' satisfaction and commitment towards the organisation forever. In the present study, all the

established relationships are found to be statistically significant. Results of the study strongly support the hypothesised relationships. Results demonstrate that internal marketing positively and significantly affects employees' attitude i.e. job commitment and job satisfaction. High positive leader's proclivity results in more influence of internal marketing practices on employee commitment. In addition, High internal communication results in more influence of internal marketing practices on job satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that leader's proclivity and internal communication are important moderators for internal marketing practices in influencing employees' attitudinal outcomes.

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