



Exploring the linkage between workplace precaution measures, covid-19 fear and job performance: The moderating effect of academic competence

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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) has created emerging mental health challenges around the world. Like other countries, Pakistan is also confronted with covid-19 calamities. The aim of the study is to examine the impacts of workplace measures (WM) on the job performance (JP) and covid-19 fears (CF) along with the moderating role of academic competence (AC) based on the organizational support theory (OST) and job demand and resources (JDR) theory. A quantitative approach was applied to collect data from 333 banking employees in Gujranwala (Pakistan), and the hypothesis were tested via structural equation modeling using SPSS and AMOS. The study findings indicate that workplace measures significantly affect covid-19 fears except for individual preventive measures (IPM). Similarly, workplace measures significantly impact on job performance apart from information about the pandemic (IAP). Moreover, academic competence insignificantly moderates between workplace measures and covid-19 fears, but a significant moderation is found between information about pandemic (IAP) and covid-19 fears. Meanwhile, academic competence significantly moderates between workplace measures and job performance instead of a relationship between information about pandemic and job performance. However, this study was limited only to the banking sector of Pakistan. So, it will open the doors for future researchers to investigate other cultural contexts and sectors. This research gives a holistic understanding of workplace measures and contributes to the body of knowledge by enlightening the moderating role of academic competence in the banking sector of Pakistan. These useful insights would enable practitioners and policy makers to develop more efficient strategies and workplace measures to enhance job performance and reduce the fears of covid-19 among employees.

Keywords Workplace measures · Covid-19 fear · Job performance · Academic competence

Introduction

Covid-19 has led to severe mental health challenges around the globe (Ornell et al., 2020). These unprecedented hazards are reported as fear, depression, worry, and many other

psychological disorders. Pakistan also suffered from the Covid-19 outbreak outcomes. As a primary contributing sector of Pakistan, the service sector is intensively affected by the hasty blowout of covid-19 fear. Particularly, the hospitality, banking, transportation, and tourism sectors are influenced by covid-19 fear severely (Javed, 2020). This relentless pandemic damaged the banking sector of Pakistan and brought the situation to a horrible condition. Despite risks, banking, and healthcare professionals have worked to counteract covid-19.

In Covid-19 calamities, personal protective equipment such as face masks, shields, gloves, rubber boots, gowns, and headcovers are highly recommended. Personal protective measures are proved significant in the prevention of the rapid transferability of Covid-19. However, the service sector of Pakistan is highly affected because of unavoidable public interactions (Mushtaque et al., 2022). Although World Health Organization (WHO) has provided

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guidelines for the safety of employees working in different sectors and disseminated the relevant *Standard Operating Procedures* (SOPs), the health workers faced a huge loss. WHO has strictly ordered professionals to follow safety measures (WHO, 2020). For social distancing, workers are separated by putting barriers between work desks. Moreover, organizations temporarily assigned their employees to leave during the Covid-19 lockdown. Restaurants and educational institutions are temporarily closed during the lockdown announced by the Government of Pakistan. If any employee has Covid-19 symptoms, 14 days of abstention from work are allowed for isolation (Usman et al., 2020). The organizations have also started providing training and information to their employees about the SOPs. Interestingly, the employee's knowledge is influenced by academic competence, which influences the technical skillset of employees on the managerial and personal levels. Moreover, the banking sector contributes to Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP), as was noted at 44.58% in 2017. The banking sector has a vital role in developing the state economy (Hamza & Khan, 2014). This sector has intermediated between investors and savers financially and played a significant role in the prosperity of Pakistan.

Employees perceive a sense of comfort, equity, pride, fairness, and physical protection in a hazard-free working environment which boosts their creativity, belongingness, and purpose and positively influences their performance. However, the relentless of Covid-19 triggers countless psychological issues, and covid-19 fear tendency prevails in employees to a dreadful state. The horrible consequences generate fear, anxiety, depression, and other psychological distress. The first suicide case has found in Bangladesh due to covid-19 fear in 2020 (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020). Pakistan includes in the top ten countries where Covid-19 cases and deaths are reported daily. The first suicide case of a female was reported in Pakistan due to covid-19 fear on March 18, 2020. Covid-19 fear also seems a great threat to the state economy. If such a situation gets prolonger, it will damage the state economy by affecting hospitality, banking, transportation, tourism, and other sectors. Furthermore, a comprehensive investigation of the literature has been found insufficient in this regard. Hence, prior studies have suggested investigating the psychological issues of employees in relation to their knowledge and academic competencies (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020; Wong et al., 2020), to adopt the most influential measures to reduce the fear of covid-19 and enhance the job performance. Thus, a study needs to investigate workplace measures that can improve employees' cognitive abilities and assist them in working effectively. It's also crucial to pinpoint the role of the employee's academic competence in this case (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020). This study derived its base from the pertinent literature for investigating the impact of workplace

measures on covid-19 fear and job performance. It also found grounds to examine the moderating role of academic competence (Sasaki et al., 2020). However, the prior studies have never focused on evaluating the various workplace measures to reduce the fear of covid-19 and enhance job performance along with the moderating role of academic competence based on the organizational support theory and job demand and resources theory, especially in the banking sector of Pakistan. Therefore, this study anticipated the need for research and aims to investigate the influence of workplace measures on covid-19 fear, job performance, and the moderating role of academic competence. Moreover, this research is likely to fulfill this gap by having the objectives to investigate about the following shortcomings;

1. What are the impacts of workplace measures on covid-19 fear and job performance?
2. Does academic competence moderate between workplace measures and covid-19 fear?
3. Does academic competence moderate between workplace measures and job performance?

Consequently, this study provides a solid theoretical framework to evaluate the workplace measures to reduce the fear of covid-19 and enhance job performance among the employees of banking sector in Pakistan. This study is likely to contribute to the organizational support theory, job demand and resources (JDR) theory, and practices. First, this research is one of its first natures that investigate academic competence as a moderator between workplace measures and covid-19 fear and also between workplace measures and job performance. This study contributes by providing guidelines to the policy makers to reduce fear among service sector employees.

This study starts with the introduction of the study followed by literature review and theoretical framework. The methodology is presented in the third while results are plainly explained in the fourth section of this study. Discussion, implications, and conclusion are explained in the end of this study.

Theories and Hypotheses Development

This study found its major ground in organizational support theory (OST) and the job demand and resource theory (JDR) of Bakker and Demerouti, 2017. OST was, presented by Eisenberger et al., (1986), refers that employees perceive a sense of comfort and a supportive environment when their organization creates a hazard-free workplace. Employees perceive that their organizations care for them and give value to their contributions. In return, they perform well and actively follow safety procedures and organizational

policies (Chummar et al., 2019). According to this theory, employees perceive organizational support (OS) that results in practicing their positive attitudes in the form of helping others for mutual benefits. Moreover, they effectively address their duties for organizational benefit, which increases their level of expectations, and finally, it leads to improving their performances. Ultimately, when employees' performance improves, their organization rewards them accordingly (Kurtessis et al., 2017). However, in the views of JDR theory, the workplace measures are broken into the category of job demands and job resources to create a better work and life balance. Where job demand focuses on the emotional stress of the employees in a stressful working environment such as covid-19, and job resources are the social factors to achieve organizational goals, improve job performance, reduce stress, and motivate workers in problematic situations. The JDR theory is widely focusing to analyze the influence of workplace environment on the employee's job performance and their social well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017).

Researchers also suggested to investigate the organizational support theory in Covid-19 disruption (Caligiuri et al., 2020; Cooke et al., 2019). In covid-19, organizations develop and test different workplace safety measures to provide a secure environment for their employees (Zhang et al., 2020). Environmental disruption like covid-19 can damage the employee's well-being but it can be managed via organizational support. Therefore, the organizational supports in the workplace practices bring motivation and positively contributes in the employees' job-related well-being (Lee, 2021). Particularly, the acute changes in the workplace impact employee's psychological responses. Therefore, organizational support fosters psychological safety in employees. Contrarily, the lack of organizational support increases employees' negative emotions like the fear of pandemic Covid-19 (Singh et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a strong direct relationship between organizational support and employees' job performance (Sitorus, 2017). However, organizational support improves employees' job security and increases their job performance (Nguyen & Tran, 2021).

Workplace Measures and Covid-19 Fear

An organization is a place where many people connect on a daily basis for official and personal matters. Meanwhile, in an epidemiological situation, psychical contact fosters the chances of transmission. Therefore, organizational preventive and protection measures minimize the probability of rapid transmission of viral diseases (Cirrincione et al., 2020). Organizational measures responses to covid-19 consist of multiple dimensions like individual preventive measure, measures reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, temporary leave, information about pandemic and covid-19

fear (Asghar et al., 2022). In the view of workplace safety measures, organizations are widely defining protection policies to ensure employees' social well-being and safety. In the scenario of covid-19, organizations are enforcing various strategies and protection measures such as; individual preventive measures, measures reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, temporary leave, information on the pandemic to protect the well-being of employees and enhance job performance.

Individual preventive measures and Covid-19 fear

Research conducted among dentists in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the US demonstrates that covid-19 anxiety among dental practitioners has not been released despite taking preventive measures individually and collectively (Ahmed et al., 2020). Another research carried out on healthcare workers in Pakistan demonstrates that safety protocols have been found ineffective in reducing employees' fear of the pandemic, and they are still reluctant to work (Usman et al., 2020). It shows an insignificant impact of preventive measures on employees' phonological conditions. Contrarily, the results of research conducted on Japanese full-time employees demonstrate that there is a significant positive relationship between precautionary measures and the stress of employees (Rasool et al., 2020). Another research carried out in China demonstrates that hygiene measures significantly improve employees' phonological conditions (Tan et al., 2020). Particularly, the individual preventive measure means that every individual has a different psyche and uses different measures to avoid covid-19, such as wearing masks and keeping social distance. Therefore, the grounds of existing literature provide a two-sided picture. Hence, it can be said that the literature is not synchronized in this matter, and further investigation has been required. This study addressed this need for research and hypothesizes that individual preventive measure significantly influences the covid-19 fear of employees:

H1a: Individual preventive measure have a significant relationship with covid-19 fear.

Measures Reducing Risk (MRR) and Covid-19 Fear

Research performed in the Italian socio-cultural context highlights that social distancing significantly resulted in overloading stress (Pronzato & Risi, 2021). To investigate the impact of covid-19 fear on social distancing, a study was conducted on doctors and teachers in Pakistan. The results revealed that there is a significant effect of covid-19 fear on social distancing (Naveed et al., 2021). Another research carried out in the state of Arizona (US) on supermarket workers highlights that the impact of workplace

safety fosters stress and psychological distress in the workers (Zurlo et al., 2020). A study performed in the Philippines on front-line nurses demonstrates that organizational support significantly reduces covid-19 anxiety (Labrague and De los Santos, 2020). Specifically, the measures for reducing risks on an organizational level can reduce the risks of spreading the corona virus, like online transactions and operations to reduce the risk of spreading covid-19. However, the existing literature provides ground for analyzing different organizational measures taken to release the covid-19 fear. However, a holistic view of measures to reduce the risk of covid-19 was ignored. This study aims to investigate the impact of measures reducing risks of covid-19 on covid-19 fear. Therefore, it is hypothesizing that measure reducing risk has a significant impact on covid-19 fear:

H1b: Measure reducing risk has a significant relationship with covid-19 fear.

Stay-at-Home Procedures (SHP) and Covid-19 Fear

During Covid-19, organizations set procedures for self-isolation to protect their employees. In the stay-at-home procedure, organizations provide flexibility in the working conditions and allow their employees to work for the organizations' online way from their homes to ensure their well-being and achieve their organizational objectives. A literature-based study aims to investigate the impact of covid-19 on employees' mental health and demonstrates that covid-19 negatively impacts employees' mental health due to quarantine (Hamouche, 2020). Separating individuals from the public results negatively in mental conditions (Rubin & Wessely, 2020; Xiang et al., 2020). Research carried out in East Taiwan on health care workers (HCW) in severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) found that quantized staff was highly stressed during the pandemic (Bai et al., 2004). According to the existing literature, it can be concluded that the organizational procedures i.e., refraining from the workplace in case of illness and staying at home if having any foreign travel leads to foster pandemic fear. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that stay-at-home procedures have a significant impact on covid-19 fear of employees:

H1c: Stay-at-home procedures have a significant relationship with covid-19 fear.

Temporary Leave (TL) and Covid-19 Fear

A study carried out in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador on healthcare workers demonstrates that organizational support measures mitigate employees' anxiety and fear (Zhang et al., 2020a, b). Another research conducted on dentists in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia aims to evaluate the knowledge of

dentists about covid-19 practice modifications and found that despite knowledge, dentists were high anxiety and fear (Oti-Boadi et al., 2022). In covid-19, knowledge, attitudes, and practices cause covid-19 fears (Tadesse et al., 2020). The existing literature provides the ground on which it can be said that temporary leave, providing knowledge on dealing with covid-19 cases and getting informed about treatment at home, affects the covid-19 fears (Rehman et al., 2021). After reviewing prior studies, this research found that very rare studies discuss this issue, and further investigation should be taken. Therefore, based on the pertinent literature, it hypothesizes that in temporary leave, the provision of information on combating with covid-19 calamities influences covid-19 fear of employees. Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H1d: Temporary leave has a significant relationship with covid-19 fear.

Information about Pandemic and Covid-19 Fear

A study carried out in Canada on a cohort of people during SARS found that the improper guidelines complying with self-isolation are a significant reason for post-traumatic stress (Reynolds et al., 2008). Another research conducted in Senegal during Ebola found that the lack of information about the risks associated with the pandemic resulted in fear (Döring, 2021). Previous literature also confirmed that the information about the pandemic. i.e. implementation of preventive measures, the announcement of the source of information and information on the duration of measures, influence on covid-19 fears (Gundogan, 2021). By reviewing the literature, it has been found that past studies investigated previous pandemics, and no one discusses the direct impact of information about pandemic on covid-19 fears. Therefore, the literature is not clear and further investigation is required. This study hypothesis that information about pandemic significantly affects the covid-19 fears of employees. Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H1e: Information about pandemic has a significant relationship with covid-19 fears.

Individual Preventive Measure and Job Performance

Prior studies indicate that occupational health and safety significantly affect employee performance (Rahmi et al., 2020; Yenita, 2022). Ahmad and Sattar (2017) demonstrate that employees' health and safety precautions significantly impact employee performance. The results of a study performed on employees demonstrate that occupational health and safety have no impact on employee performance (Ekowati and Amin (2019). By reviewing the literature, it has been found that the prior researchers discuss the context

generically, but no one takes it in a pandemic context individually, and there is a lack of studies that discuss the direct impact of the individual preventive measure on job performance. Therefore, there is a strong need to examine this relationship. On the grounds of pertinent literature, it is hypothesized that individual preventive measure, hand washing, encourage wearing masks and cough etiquettes, influence job performance:

H2a: Individual preventive measure have a significant relationship with job performance.

Measures Reducing Risk and Job Performance

A study conducted in Rwanda on a steel manufacturing company demonstrates that workplace safety precautions significantly enhance employee commitment which resulted in excellent performance (Umugwaneza et al., 2019). According to organization preventive measures improve productivity. Because it strengthens employees 'confidence and they perceive organizational support. The results of a study demonstrate that organizational measures for employee safety have no significant impact on job performance (Ekowati and Amin (2019). The pertinent literature provides two-sided views. Moreover, the existing literature is not related to a pandemic context. Therefore, it should be clear about this issue. On the grounds of existing literature, it can be the hypothesis that the measure reducing risks such as changing the workplace environment, encouraging teleworking and staggered work, significantly influence job performance: Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H2b: Measure reducing risks has a significant relationship with job performance.

Stay-at-Home Procedures and Job Performance

A study performed on Italian non-listed firms demonstrated that organizational efforts for employee safety improve performance (Passetti et al., (2020). Another study conducted in Eastern Canada on trade apprentices and college students found that employers' guidelines and obligations improve safety performance (Mullen et al., (2017). A study found no disruption of adaptive organizational practices in covid-19 on the job insecurity of employees (Oluoch, 2015). Although past studies discuss the related issues but there is a lack of studies examining a direct relationship between stay-at-home procedures and job performance. On the grounds of existing literature, it can be the hypothesis that stay-at-home procedures, report request for fever, staying at home having foreign trips and sitting at home in case of illness significantly impact the job performance. Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H2c: Stay-at-home procedures have a significant relationship with job performance.

Temporary Leave and Job Performance

Research performed in India on private sector employees found that work-from-home creates a work-life balance and significantly impacts job performance (Pant & Agarwal, 2020). Another study performed among the service organization employees demonstrate that work implications significantly impact employees' performance (Oluoch, 2015). The existing literature discussing this issue has been found insufficient, and there is a need to investigate this matter further in the pandemic context. Therefore, this situation can be coped with in the future. On the grounds of existing literature, this study hypothesis that temporary leave, providing information about combating covid-19 infected cases in the workplace, provision of information on treatment when staying at home and on leave in case of infection, significantly affects the job performance of employees. Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H2d: Temporary leave has a significant relationship with job performance.

Information about Pandemic and Job Performance

A study performed in Rwanda on the steel manufacturing industry found that organizational training increases performance (Umugwaneza et al. (2019). On the other hand, a study performed in Bangladesh in the banking sector found that training has no impact on employee performance (Al Karim et al., (2019). A study carried out in Vietnam on hotel employees found the results that organizations covid-19 responses positively influence job performance (Kumar et al., 2021). The pertinent literature provides the grounds on that basis, and it can be the hypothesis that information about pandemic. consideration for infected staff, the announcement of reliable information collection sources, provision of information on the duration of measures, and implementation of preventive measures significantly impact the job performance. Therefore, we hypothesis that:

H2e: Information about pandemic has a significant relationship with job performance.

The moderating effect of academic competence

A model of academic competence presented by DiPerna and Elliott (1999), stated that academic competence is the combination of knowledge, skills, and behaviors of students, which assist in getting remarkable academic results and has two domains such as academic skills and academic enablers.

Academic competence plays a vital role in understanding organizational guidelines and influences employees' organizational practices. Covid-19 dreadfully affects the workplaces, the mental and psychological conditions of employees. In this situation, the role of academic competence cannot be underestimated. A study performed in Tehran on construction industry workers demonstrates that higher educational attainment of workers resulted in decreased workplace injuries (Karimi and Taghaddos (2019)). The results of another research conducted on less educated people revealed that less educated people have less safety consciousness and citizenship. Another study carried out in the US demonstrates that higher educational attainment has reduced occupational stress (Assari and Bazargan (2019)). The grounds of literature provide attention to the significant role of the academic competence of employees in the workplace. Moreover, individual academic competence also varies, which assists in dealing with the pandemic. A study conducted on nurses working in Zabol educational hospitals demonstrates that occupational fatigue negatively affects safety climate. It has stated that education levels have influenced safety climate and fatigue differently, and higher safety climate education reduces occupational fatigue (Poursadeqiyani et al. (2020)). Another study performed on the public of 8 countries found that fear and knowledge are not correlated. There is a variation in knowledge, attitudes, practices, and covid-19 fear due to geographical regions (Rasool et al., (2019)). A study carried out in Bangladesh aims to examine the level of KAP regarding covid-19, self-safety habits, and covid-19 fear revealed that high knowledge and practices exist in males, educated people, senior citizens, and urban. So, it can be said that the individual's knowledge plays an important role in dealing with any critical situation. Research performed in Mexico on nursing students demonstrates that the presence of high stress with a low level of knowledge cause covid-19 fear (Çağış & Yıldırım, 2023). Another study conducted in Mexican institutions investigated social isolation's impact on mental health and academic performance and found that social isolation disturbs the mental condition of students and significantly impacts academic performance (Limón-Vázquez et al., (2020)). Based on existing literature, it can be concluded that employees' academic competence influences their stress and fear during staying at home during covid-19. Research conducted on healthcare workers demonstrates that there is a positive and significant correlation between workers' knowledge, age, and experience. Moreover, a significant difference exists in management who are trained and untrained (Mansour et al., (2020)). It has been demonstrated that highly knowledgeable people have exhibited positive behaviors for social distancing (Yanti et al. (2020)). It means that an employee's academic competence affects their mental condition in adopting

organizational measures. The results of research on Yemeni healthcare workers found that most workers had adequate knowledge, optimistic attitudes, moderate stress, and were highly active in safety practices. Another study conducted on healthcare workers in China found that 89% of healthcare workers knew about the pandemic, and their knowledge influenced attitudes and practices in response to covid-19. Human resource development has influenced employee competency building (Potnuru and Sahoo (2016)). Although, the pertinent literature discussed the related issues while no study has been found which examine the moderating effect of academic competence between workplace measure and covid-19 fear and there is a strong need to examine the role of academic competence in a pandemic context. Therefore, based on pertinent literature and the gap existing in this literature, the present study aims to check the moderating role of academic competence in the relationship between workplace measure and covid-19 fear. Therefore, the hypotheses of the present study related to the moderating role of academic competence in the relationship between workplace measure and covid-19 fear are as follows:

H3a: Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between the individual preventive measure and covid-19 fear.

H3b: Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between measures reducing risks and covid-19 fear.

H3c: Academic competence significantly moderates between stay-at-home and covid-19 fear.

H3d: Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between temporary leave and covid-19 fear.

H3e: Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between pandemic information and covid-19 fear.

Kaynak et al., (2016) indicated that safety practices affect job performance indirectly. Education is correlated with the adoption of safety and privacy practices (Zou et al., 2020). Research performed in Jamaica on the manufacturing industry found that there is moderating positive correlation between health and safety rules and job performance (Thompson et al. (2020)). Another research analyzed the relationship between organizational preventive measures and health competencies (Okun et al., (2016)). A study on persons of occupational health and safety (OSH) management system indicated that the employee's education has a significant role in creating a safe and healthy organization (Stefanović et al., (2019)). Research carried out in China demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between firm performance and HR practices and is partially mediated by employee competencies (van Esch et al., (2018)), and training and education increases employee

performance (Mukminin et al., (2020). Another study in Malaysia investigated the mediating role of employee competencies between training and employee performance Mahmood et al., (2018). The literature presents the grounds which demonstrate that employee competencies affect their safety behaviors and job performance. Although the related relations have been investigated in prior studies, therefore, there is a lack of research investigating the moderating role of academic competence specifically. Therefore, on the basis of the literature and on finding the gap in existing literature, the current study aims to investigate the moderating role of academic competence in the relationship between workplace measures and job performance. Therefore, the hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

- H3f:** Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between the individual preventive measure and job performance.
- H3g:** Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between measures reducing risks and job performance.
- H3h:** Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between the stay-at-home procedure and job performance.
- H3i:** Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between temporary leave and job performance.
- H3j:** Academic competence significantly moderates the relationship between information about the pandemic and job performance (Fig. 1).

2 Methodology

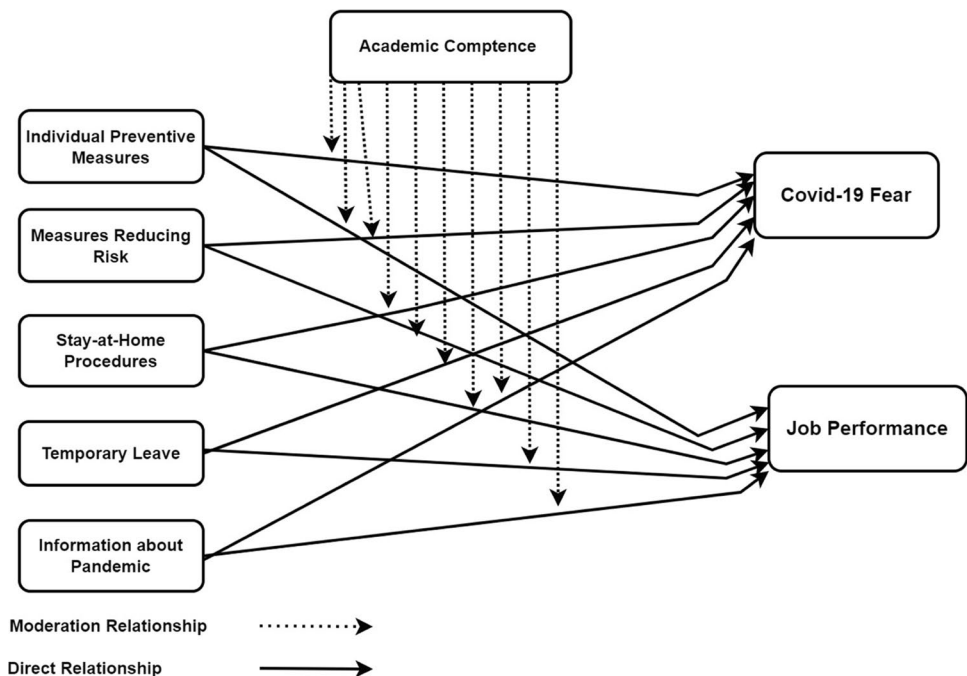
2.1 Research Approach

In the current research, we used a survey approach. Three main reasons behind using the survey approach. First, it is easy to collect and analyze data and avoid misunderstandings (Hussain et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020). Secondly, the author wants to use a questionnaire survey approach because, through this method, there is more chance of getting accurate data from a large number of respondents in a limited time frame. Rasool et al. (2019), demonstrate that the questionnaire survey approach starts with developing a research questionnaire.

Sample and Data

This research is performed in the context of employees working in the banking sector of Gujranwala, Pakistan. We collect data from Gujranwala because this is one of the big city amongst 13 biggest cities of Pakistan (Altaf & Deshazo, 1996). Moreover, this industrial city of Pakistan has significantly contributed to the state economy. There are more than 25 commercial banks in this city, and each bank deals with a sufficient number of customers from various backgrounds on daily basis. Researchers used a deductive approach for the data collection, and a quantitative data collection method was chosen. The purpose of this research is hypothesis testing. Furthermore, it is a cross-sectional study using an online survey strategy. A convenience sampling method is used due to the difficulty in approaching employees during covid-19. Total of 350 questionnaires were circulated, but the current

Fig. 1. Theoretical Model



study only collects data from 333 banking employees. For data collection, a questionnaire consisting of 5 point-Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 is used in which one depicts "strongly disagree", and 5 depicts "strongly agree". People have terrified of covid-19 and are reluctant to contact others physically; therefore, an online survey strategy is selected.

Measures of Variables

A scale consisting of 23 workplace measures was adapted and used for the measurement of workplace measures developed by Sasaki et al. (2020), Zeb et al. (2020) and Iqbal et al., (2021). The items of workplace measures were considered into seven categories. In the current study, workplace measures were arranged into the following five categories by merging three categories of scale to avoid confusion among respondents and reduce the risk of similarities.

Individual preventive measures

Five items of the scale were used for the measurement of individual preventive measures. The items of individual preventive measures were taken by Sasaki et al. (2020). The sample items of the construct are; "Hand washing, gargle enforcement", and "Encourage wearing masks". The items were close-ended, but choices were given from strongly agree to disagree as per the concept of Five-Point Likert scale strongly. The respondents were asked to mark the most suitable option per their expertise.

Measures Reducing Risks

Eight items of the scale were used for the measurement of measures reducing risks. A five-point rating scale was used for this scale. The items of measure reducing risks were taken by Sasaki et al. (2020). The sample items of the construct are; "Disinfection of the work environment", and "Refrain from traveling overseas".

Stay Home Procedure

Stay home procedure was measured using four items of the scale. The items of measure reducing risks were taken by Sasaki et al. (2020). The sample items of the construct are; "Request to refrain from going to work when ill", and "Report request for fever".

Temporary Leave

The temporary leave was measured using three items of the scale. The items of measure reducing risks were taken by Sasaki et al. (2020). The sample items of the construct are; "Providing information on how to deal with infected cases

in the workplace", and "Providing information on treatment (pay) when waiting at home".

Information About Pandemic

Four items of the scale were used for the measurement of information about the pandemic. The items of measure reducing risks were taken by Sasaki et al. (2020). The sample items of the construct are; "Consideration for staff who are at high risk of serious illness in case of infection (elderly people, pregnant women)" and "Announcement of reliable information collection destinations (such as the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare website)".

Covid-19 Fear

In the present study, covid-19 fear was measured by adopting a seven-item scale developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020). Five-point Likert scale was used for the measurement of covid-19 fear. The range was set from "1" "strongly disagree" to "5" strongly agree". A sample items are "I afraid from the covid-19 that negatively effect my performance" and " Covid-19 fear discourage me to hard work on my courses"

Job Performance

In this study, job performance was measured by adopting a scale consisting of nine items drawn by (Zeb et al., 2020) . For the measurement of job performance five-point Likert scale ranging from "1" to "5" was used. A sample item from that scale is "I fulfilled performance requirements of the job". and "I performed task that were expected for me".

Academic Competence

In the present study, academic competence was measured by adapting a four items scale developed by (Iqbal et al., 2021). Five-point Likert scale was used for the measurement of items scale ranging from "1" to "5". Sample items are "I get good grades when I want to" and "My academic performance motivate me to study hard".

Data Analysis

For data analysis, two software applications SPSS and AMOS, have been used. Variables have been designed and transformed. Moreover, data has been screened to analyze the normality and reliability of the data. Correlation, regression, and moderation have also been performed. Moreover, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling have been tested to improve the accuracy of the analysis procedure.

Results and Analysis

A total number of 333 respondents have been given their responses, from which 182 were males while 151 responses were females, 102 respondents were between 20 and 29 years, 120 between 30 and 39, 66 between 40 and 49, 15 respondents between 50 and 59, and 30 were above 60. However, 46 respondents had experience of fewer than 2 years, 145 had between 3 to 5, 111 had between 6 to 8, and 31 respondents had more than 8 years of working experience. Moreover, 173 respondents were single, and 160 were married. Additionally, 73 responses were collected from a company size of fewer than 50 employees, 164 were collected from 50 to 299 company size, and 84 belonged to 300 to 999, and 12 were collected from a company with more than 1000 employees. In terms of job type, 105 respondents had a lower level, 90 had a middle, and 138 had a higher level.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows that the data is cleaned in terms of missing values. The minimum and maximum values are in the range of 1 and 5, which depicts no outliers' issues. Furthermore, the skewness values show that all values are in the threshold range (-1 to +1), which means that the data is normal. (Burns & Burns, 2008; Norusis, 2012).

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Table 2 shows that the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.932. It shows that the sample selected for this study is adequate and can be used to analyze it (Virglerova et al., 2022). Similarly, the value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is also significant, which means there is no redundancy in research factors, so the sample is appropriate to analyze, and the researcher can freely run factor analysis on this data (Kaiser, 1974).

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.932
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		12045.350
	Df		861
	Sig.		.000

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Composite reliability and AVE have thresholds values of 0.7 and 0.5 respectively. However, the outcomes show that all values are in the threshold range (Rehman & Prokop, 2023; Rehman & Zeb, 2022). Moreover, the diagonal values of the table 3 demonstrates that each variable is highly associated with itself as compared to the other variables, which means there is a convergent and discriminant validity in the data (Chan & Idris, 2017).

Model Fit

Table 4 depicts CFA results, and the values for CMIN/DF are <3, GFI is >0.8, IFI is >0.9, and RMSEA is <0.08. The results show that all values against the variables lie between thresholds, indicating that our proposed model is fit and appropriate for further testing and structural equation modeling Kim et al., (2016) as RMSEA values less than 0.05 are good, while values between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 indicates that individual preventive measures have an insignificant impact on covid-19 fear because the p-value is >0.05. Therefore, H1 is rejected, and it has also been found that any increase or decrease in individual preventive measures does not bring any significant change in covid-19 fear. Results also found that measuring reducing risks

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
IPM	333	1.00	5.00	3.2348	1.04351	-.174
MRR	333	1.00	5.00	3.2978	1.02967	-.462
SHP	333	1.00	5.00	3.4189	1.15146	-.297
TL	333	1.00	5.00	3.1211	1.02887	.009
IAP	333	1.00	5.00	3.1982	1.26264	-.258
AC	333	1.00	5.00	3.1944	1.20190	-.165
JP	333	1.00	5.00	3.5015	1.02351	-.510
CF	333	1.00	5.00	2.7422	1.37114	.411

IPM = Individual preventive measures, MRR = Measures Reducing Risks, SHP = Stay Home Procedure, TL = Temporary Leave, IAP = Information About Pandemic, AC = Academic Competence, JP = Job Performance, CF = Covid-19 Fear

Table 3 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

	Item	FL	CR	AVE	MSV	CF	IPM	MRR	SHP	TL	IAP	AC	JP
CF	CF1	0.85	0.947	0.717	0.342	0.847							
	CF2	0.82											
	CF3	0.84											
	CF4	0.84											
	CF5	0.86											
	CF6	0.82											
	CF7	0.89											
IPM	IP1	0.77	0.861	0.554	0.548	-0.304	0.745						
	IP1	0.72											
	IP1	0.75											
	IP1	0.76											
	IP1	0.73											
MRR	MR1	0.76	0.889	0.573	0.264	-0.364	0.436	0.757					
	MR2	0.90											
	MR3	0.74											
	MR4	0.72											
	MR5	0.71											
	MR6	0.80											
SHP	SHP1	0.86	0.893	0.675	0.658	-0.330	0.657	0.437	0.822				
	SHP2	0.83											
	SHP3	0.79											
	SHP4	0.81											
TL	TL1	0.77	0.820	0.603	0.345	-0.345	0.435	0.437	0.282	0.777			
	TL2	0.82											
	TL3	0.75											
IAP	IA1	0.97	0.977	0.913	0.521	-0.520	0.261	0.386	0.284	0.354	0.956		
	IA2	0.95											
	IA3	0.95											
	IA4	0.95											
AC	AC1	0.92	0.960	0.858	0.521	-0.585	0.416	0.491	0.435	0.587	0.722	0.926	
	AC2	0.95											
	AC3	0.93											
	AC4	0.90											
JP	JP1	0.97	0.916	0.550	0.258	-0.321	0.740	0.514	0.811	0.436	0.350	0.515	0.742
	JP2	0.74											
	JP3	0.70											
	JP4	0.72											
	JP5	0.74											
	JP6	0.89											
	JP7	0.89											
	JP8	0.74											
	JP9	0.77											

IPM = Individual preventive measures, MRR = Measures Reducing Risks, SHP = Stay Home Procedure, TL = Temporary Leave, IAP = Information About Pandemic, AC = Academic Competence, JP = Job Performance, CF = Covid-19 Fear

significantly impacts covid-19 fear, and H2 is accepted. It depicts that by increasing one unit in measures reducing risks, there will be a 15.3% decrease in covid-19 fear. The stay-at-home procedures significantly impacted covid-19 fear (p-value <0.05). Thus, any change in stay-at-home

procedures will cause an improvement in covid-19 fear. So, H3 is accepted. Furthermore, temporary leave also significantly affects covid-19 fear because its p-value is .038. Hence, H4 is accepted. Results further revealed a significant impact of information about the pandemic on covid-19 fear

Table 4 Confirmatory Factors Analysis

Indicators	Threshold range	Current values
CMIN/DF	Less or equal 3	1.960
GFI	Equal or greater .80	.822
CFI	Equal or greater .90	.936
IFI	Equal or greater .90	.935
RMSEA	Less or equal .08	.054

because its p-value is 100% significant. H5 is accepted, it means that with one unit increase in information about the pandemic, there will be a 34.2% decrease in covid-19 fear.

Therefore, based on the results, it can be said that the banking sector is not defining and implementing concise and clear policies for individual preventive measures to reduce the fears of covid-19. Based on the results, it can also be inferred that the banking sector has widely focused on reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, temporary leave, and information about the pandemic to reduce the fear of covid-19 among employees. It has been found that individual preventive measures have a significant effect on job performance, and a one-unit increase in individual preventive measures improves job performance by 28.8%. Thus, H6 is accepted. Measures reducing risks have a significant effect on job performance (p-value <0.05) by increasing one unit in measures reducing risks, there will be an increase in job performance by 10.9%. Therefore, H7 is accepted. Stay-at-home procedures have a significant impact on job performance. So, a one-unit increase in stay-at-home procedures improves job performance by 49.5%. Hence, H8 is accepted.

Meanwhile, temporary leave significantly impacts job performance, and H9 is accepted. Results further revealed that information about the pandemic has an insignificant impact on job performance by a p-value of .102. It indicates that any change in information about

the pandemic does not cause any improvement in job performance. Hence, H 10 is rejected. Therefore, based on the results, it can be said that the banking sector is not spreading the influential information of the pandemic to enhance employee job performance. Based on the results, it can also be inferred that the banking sector has widely focused on individual preventive measures, reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, temporary leave, and enhancing employee job performance. Table 6 presents the moderating relations. Similarly, figure 2 is describing the structural model of the study.

The results regarding moderation have revealed that academic competence moderates between individual preventive measures and covid-19 fear insignificantly because its p-value is >0.05. Hence, H11 is not supported. Same as H12, H13, H14, and H20 are not accepted (Fig. 3).

However, results regarding moderation of academic competence revealed that there is significant moderation of academic competence between information about pandemic and covid-19 fear as its p-value is <0.05 and moderate in relation by 46%. The graph also proved that there is a chance of interception between two lines. Thus, H15 is supported. Figure 4 presents the higher moderating effects.

The results and graphical representation regarding moderation revealed that academic competence significantly moderates between individual preventive measures and job performance as its p-value is <0.05. Hence, H16 is supported. Below, fig. 5 presents the moderation of academic competence between individual preventive measures and job performance.

The results regarding the moderation revealed that academic competence significantly moderates between measures reducing risks and job performance because its p-value is <0.05, and it moderates by 35%. Moreover, the two lines in the graphs also prove the relationship. So, H17 is supported. Below mentions fig. 6 presents the

Table 5 Direct Hypothesis Testing

	Path		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CF	←	IPM	-.008	.078	-.133	.894
CF	←	MRR	-.153	.072	-2.830	.005
CF	←	SHP	-.140	.069	-2.419	.016
CF	←	TL	-.109	.070	-2.073	.038
CF	←	IAP	-.342	.055	-6.730	***
JP	←	IPM	.288	.041	6.940	***
JP	←	MRR	.109	.038	2.880	.004
JP	←	SHP	.495	.036	12.199	***
JP	←	TL	.083	.037	2.269	.023
JP	←	IAP	.058	.029	1.635	.102

IPM = Individual preventive measures, MRR = Measures Reducing Risks, SHP = Stay Home Procedure, TL = Temporary Leave, IAP = Information About Pandemic, AC = Academic Competence, JP = Job Performance, CF = Covid-19 Fear

Table 6 Moderation Testing

	Path		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CF	←	AC * IPM	.015	.048	.317	.751
CF	←	AC * MRR	-.009	.046	-.197	.844
CF	←	AC * SHP	-.042	.048	-.888	.374
CF	←	AC * TL	.019	.046	.415	.678
CF	←	AC * IAP	.133	.043	3.116	.002
JP	←	AC * IPM	-.264	.038	-6.884	.000
JP	←	AC * MRR	-.132	.046	-2.868	.004
JP	←	AC * SHP	-.128	.037	-3.496	.000
JP	←	AC * TL	-.110	.047	-2.232	.020
JP	←	AC * IAP	.000	.046	.006	.995

IPM = Individual preventive measures, MRR = Measures Reducing Risks, SHP = Stay Home Procedure, TL = Temporary Leave, IAP = Information About Pandemic, AC = Academic Competence, JP = Job Performance, CF = Covid-19 Fear

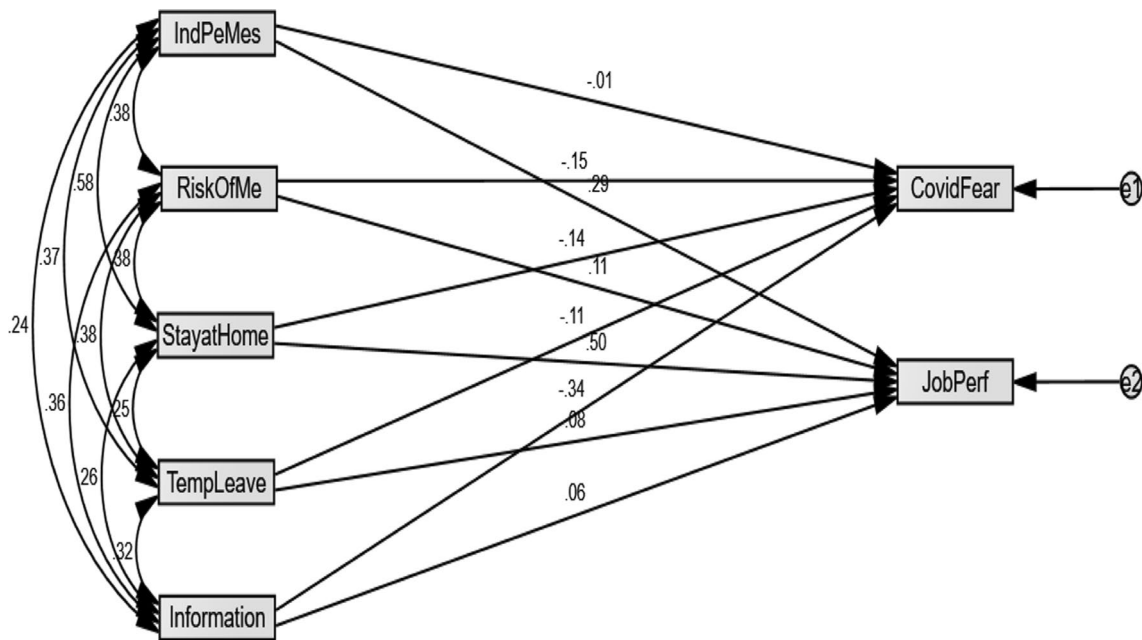


Fig. 2 Structural Model

Fig. 3 Moderation of AC between IAP and CF

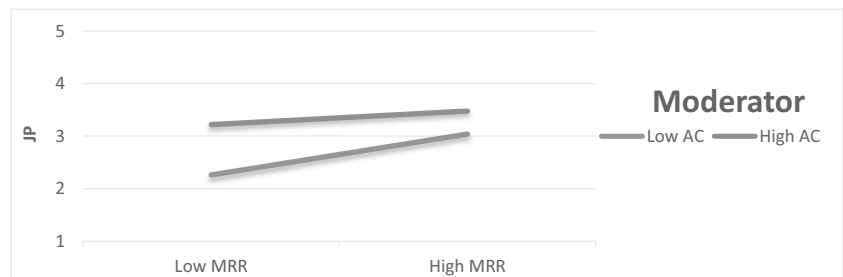


Fig. 4 Moderation of AC between IPM and JP

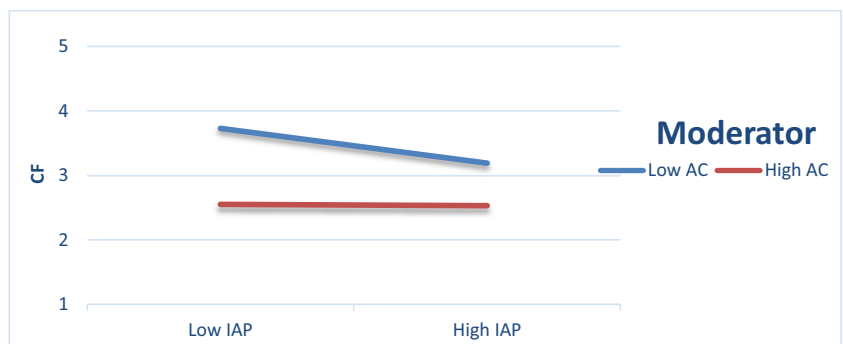


Fig. 5 Moderation of AC between MRR and JP

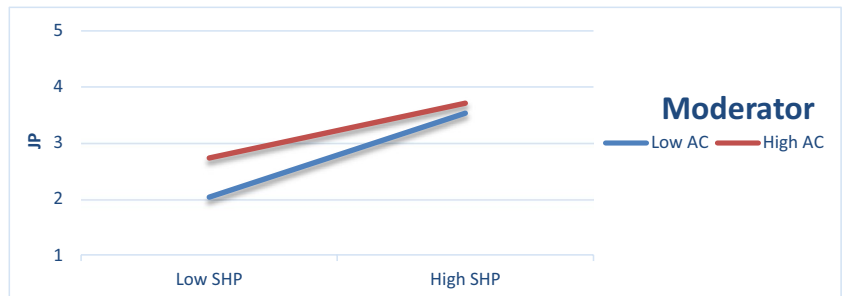


Fig. 6 Moderation of AC between SHP and JP

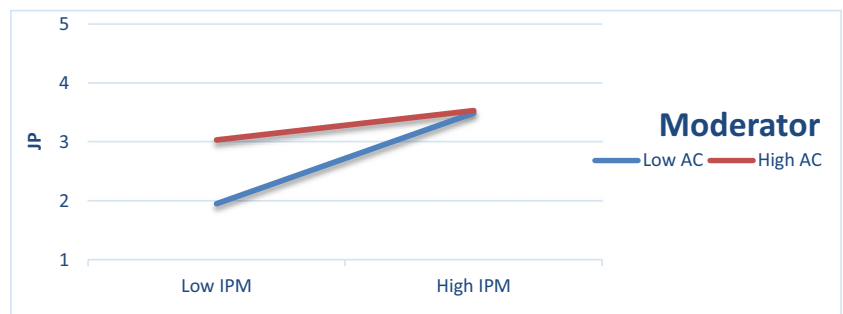
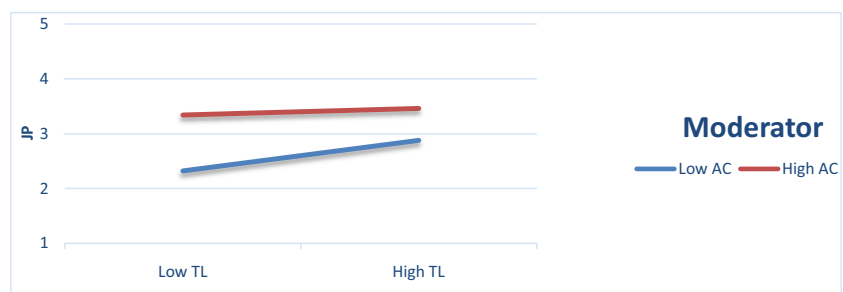


Fig. 7 Moderation of AC between TL and JP



moderation of academic competence between measures reducing risks and job performance.

The findings and graphical representation regarding the moderation show that academic competence significantly moderates between stay-at-home procedure and job performance because its p-value is <0.05 and moderates by 22%. Therefore, H18 is supported. Figure 7 presents the higher moderating effects.

The results regarding the moderation revealed that academic competence significantly moderates between temporary leave and job performance because its p-value is <0.05. Moreover, academic competence moderates by 40%. Hence, H19 is supported. Figure 7 presents the mentioned moderation effects.

Consequently, in the views of organizational support theory and job demand and resource theory, the academic

competence of employees can enhance their sense of comfort and reduce their fear of covid-19, ultimately leading them to better job performance in the organization. In addition, the hazard-free workplace and supportive environment can encourage personal self-confidence and reduce emotional stress among employees, improve their well-being, and motivate them to show higher job engagement. Hence, the theories of organizational support, job demand, and resource provide a solid theoretical background to enhance job performance and reduce the fear of covid-19 among employees.

Discussion of Findings

This research aims to analyze the impact of workplace responses to Covid-19 on employees' fear associated with Covid-19 and job performance in the banking sector of Pakistan. Moreover, academic competence is added as a novel moderator to examine its influence on the relationship between said variables. The result of H1a shows an insignificant relationship, which means H1a is rejected. The H1a is rejected because the unsubstantial value against the variables means that individual preventive measures do not significantly affect covid-19 fear. The prior studies have some contradictory results and found a significant impact of personal preventive measures on depression and anxiety (Labrague and De los Santos, 2020; Sasaki et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020). The results of the current study differ due to investigating different sectors and countries because individual behavior varies from sector to sector and country to country. The results of H1b hold a significant value, which means H1b is accepted. Prior studies have also found similar findings (J. Kumar et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020; The Khoa et al., 2020). The outcomes indicate that the organizations separated infected employees from others, and they felt excluded, which ultimately influenced their fear. Findings indicate that the H1c has a significant value, which means H1c is accepted. Past studies have also found a significant relationship (Brooks et al., 2020; Kılınçel et al., 2020; J. Kumar et al., 2020). It means that self-isolating procedures afraid employees and influence their covid-19 fear. Meanwhile, the results of Y. Wang et al. (2011) also support our results. The findings of H1d confirmed the significant relationship, which support the H1d. Pacheco et al. (2020) conducted their research in Canada and also found a significant impact of workplace preparedness on worrying symptoms. These results indicate that organizational safety measures create confidence in employees, which significantly dampens their fear. The outcomes of H1e demonstrate a significant relationship, which accepts the H1e. Past studies have also found similar findings (Kontoangelos et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020; Sasaki et al., 2020). The results of our study indicate

that when employees get training and are informed about how to combat calamity, it relieves their panic.

The results of H2a show a significant relationship, which supports H2a. Prior studies also support our results (Kampf et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2018; van de Brake et al., 2020). According to Sasaki et al. (2020), individual preventive measures have an insignificant effect on job performance. The contrary results have been found because in Pakistan, the banking sector was open in Covid-19, and banking employees were extremely affected. Therefore, individual preventive measures influenced their fear. Whereas the study that has found an insignificant relationship was held in some other circumstances. The finding of H2b holds significance, which means H2b is accepted. Umugwaneza et al. (2019) conducted a study in the steel manufacturing industry. The outcomes of this study also support our results. However, some different results have also been found, which illustrated that the direct effect of organizational safety and health measures on employee performance is insignificant because employees do not utilize safety equipment (Ekowati & Amin, 2019). The results of H2c hold a significant value that indicates that H2c is accepted. Prior studies have also found similar results (Passetti et al., 2020; Sasaki et al., 2020). The results of our study demonstrate that stay-at-home procedures restrict employees to work-from-home, which affects their performance as they feel uncomfortable at home in lockdown. The findings of H2d have proved a significant relationship that confirmed that H2d is accepted. Ekowati and Amin (2019) conducted the study among hotel employees and found a significant relationship between satisfaction from covid-19 responses and job performance. The results of H2e show an insignificant relationship, which means H2e is completely rejected. Some prior studies also support our results and have found that organizational training significantly impacts employees' job performance (Al Karim et al., 2019; bin Atan et al., 2015; Umugwaneza et al., 2019).

Past studies have investigated information related to organizational culture, orientation, safety procedures, etc. Meanwhile, this study has investigated covid-19 information. Thus, the results are contradictory. The result regarding H2a holds an insignificant value and is rejected. A study performed in China's construction industry has found a significant relationship between safety consciousness and level of education (Meng & Chan, 2020). Another study has found a significant impact of educational attainment on occupational stress (Assari & Bazargan, 2019). The results are contradictory because this study has been performed in a pandemic context. Moreover, it has been conducted in the banking sector. H2b has been found insignificant and rejected. Pour-sadeqiyan et al. (2020) conduct research among the nurses and found that occupational fatigue significantly impacts the safety climate. The findings of this study are insignificant because banking employees perceive that academic competence has no role in a pandemic scenario. The result of

H2c holds an insignificant value and is rejected. A study investigated in Canada found that employer guidelines improve safety performance. Another study conducted in Mexico has been investigated how social isolation impacts mental health and academic achievement (Limón-Vázquez et al. (2020)). Meanwhile, this study has been performed in a pandemic context so that employees have not assigned attention to academic competence and found it unimportant. H2d holds an insignificant value. Thus, it has been rejected. Research stated that the knowledge and skills of healthcare workers help in dealing with psychological distress in comparison to those workers who do not have training and knowledge (Mansour et al. (2020)). The result of this study is insignificant because it has been performed in Pakistan, where people are uneducated and not conscious of safety measures; the other studies have been performed in developed countries. H2e holds a significant value and is accepted. Because if somebody has a solid academic background, that ultimately influences their level of information attainment. Prior studies provide supportive ground (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; S. Singh, 2016).

The result of H3a is significant as a prior study (He et al., 2019). The findings are significant because academic competence help in increasing knowledge that impacts employee performance. Similarly, the results of H3b are also significant because employees with vital academics perform efficiently. The results of Thompson et al. (2020) found a positive relationship of organizational safety measures and job productivity, which support the H3b. However, the result of H3c also indicates a significant relationship. The outcome of Stefanović et al. (2019) also provides support to H3c. The findings of H3d also show a significant relationship. The findings of van Esch et al. (2018) also support the results of H3d. The results of H3d indicate an insignificant relationship, which means the H3d is rejected. Smetackova and Stech (2021) conducted a study in the Czech Republic, and their outcomes indicate an insignificant relationship supporting the H3d.

Practical Implications

The findings of the current study imply that the firms should divert their focus to the strategies of individual preventives measures, stay-at-home strategies, measures of reducing risks, temporary leave, information about the pandemic and the combination of these factors to reduce the fear of covid-19 and enhance job performance among employees. The strategies of workplace measures and academic competence can build self-confidence among employees and would be a helpful strategy to strengthen the courage among employees against the fear of covid-19 and ultimately lead to improved job performance among employees. Active workplace measures and sharing in influential measures among employees to

train them for stressful issues such as covid-19 can enhance their attachment with firms and help to achieve the organizational objectives. Educating employees to upgrade their skills and competencies can help build the perception among employees that they are cared and are the part of best organization among communities, improving their job engagement and reducing the fear of covid-19. In addition, the preventive measures at the workplace can also protect employees from viral diseases like covid-19 and can help in efficient organization and day-to-day activities. Further, employees' competencies can help handle problematic situations, wisely implement preventive measures at the workplace, and display a good image for the communities.

Theoretical Implications

This study merged the literature of workplace measures, academic competence, covid-19 fear, job performance based on the findings from the emerging economy and validated the proposed research model in the Pakistani context. The application of AMOS in the defined context is also a novel methodological contribution in the current literature. This study also extended the theory of organizational support, job demand, and resources by developing a theoretical framework and subsequently validated it with the data collection. The validated model contributes to the relevant literature and enhances understanding of workplace measures to reduce the fear of covid-19 and enhance job performance among employees. This study contributes to the organizational support theory in the context of enhancing the sense of comfort in the fear of covid-19 and supporting the working environment to improve job engagement. This study also extends the theory of job demand and resources to reduce the emotional stress among employees and enhance their well-being in a supportive working environment. Therefore, the validated theoretical framework is a novel contribution in the relevant literature.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of workplace measures on fear of covid-19 and job performance along with the moderating role of academic competence. The results of the current study revealed that measures reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, temporary leave, and information about the pandemic significantly affect covid-19 fear, while individual preventive measures have non-significant effects. Similarly, individual preventive measures, measures reducing risks, stay-at-home procedures, and temporary have a significant relationship with job performance but information about pandemic has a non-significant relationship. Moreover, academic competence

has non-significant moderating effects on the relationship between workplace measures and covid-19 fear, but significant moderating effects between information about the pandemic and covid-19 fear. Additionally, academic competencies have significant moderating effects on the relationship between workplace measures and job performance but non-significant effects on the relationship between information about the pandemic and job performance. This research has significantly contributed to the existing literature by proposing a unique research model, empirically validating with data collection, and adding in the organizational support theory and theory of job demand and resources. Furthermore, this study has contributed by evaluating the academic competencies in the defined context. Although prior studies have contributed to the relevant literature this is the first study to examine the moderating role of academic competencies in these domains. Further, this study is novel research to examine the role of workplace measures, covid-19 fear, and job performance in the banking sector of Pakistan. This study also guides the practitioners to train the employees for uncertain situations like covid-19 to maintain sustainable job performance.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Apart from significantly contributing theoretically and practically, the present study has some limitations. First, this study has been carried out in the banking sector of Pakistan. Therefore, the current study suggested that future researchers investigate this relationship in other sectors, such as manufacturing, telecommunication, and small and medium-sized enterprises. So, the results for these sectors may contradict the findings of this study. Second, this research focused on the academic competence of employees only, while a number of competencies might impact employee fear and performance. Furthermore, the current study considered covid-19 fear, while the other stress factors and moderating factors, i.e., work-from-home, teleworking, and future research, can also assess employer's trust. Moreover, the present study was conducted during covid-19. Therefore, this study has used a cross-sectional approach. However, the longitudinal approach might be used to check before and after effects. Finally, this study has performed in Pakistan only. Therefore, the pandemic effects may vary from country to country.

Data Availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Declarations

All participants gave their informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study. We would like to declare that the work described is original research that has not been published previously and not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All procedures performed were by the ethical standards as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standard. The ethical committee approved all the procedures of University of the Punjab, Lahore and University of Hradec Kralove.

Conflicts of Interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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