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## The Employee Associations and their Relations with the Overall Management of Universities in Peshawar: Issues and Barriers

### Abstract

*Employee associations serve as resources of interested employees in helping the advisory committees and the staff task forces. Besides, they may also help in publicizing information of interest, procedures, and policy to employees and participate actively in the process of academic review. In universities, a significant role is played by employees' unions. Unlike Employee unions, the existence of employee associations differs a lot. Many benefits can be gained from the relationship between the management of the University and employee association. It has been found that in the past, universities in Pakistan have failed to revive and engage with their employees, due to which effectiveness was lost majorly by the associations present in the universities. This research paper will critically reflect upon the relationship between the employee association and the overall management of the universities of Peshawar. Further, it will also identify the significant barriers and issues faced by the employees' associations.*

**Key Words:** Employee associations, Organizational management, Barriers.

### Introduction

According to [Hirsch & Macpherson \(2003\)](#), the relationship between employee association and organizational management can play a critical role in achieving organizational success, especially in today's rapidly growing and changing business environment. [Nickum \(2017\)](#) suggested that management can be perceived as the procedure of working with resources and people to achieve organizational objectives. Four essential functions (controlling, leading, organizing, and planning) are expected to be performed by organizational management. In comparison to this, representing the employers in collective bargaining negotiations is the crucial function of employers' associations. An excellent relationship between the organizational management and employee associations must be maintained, and this relationship must have a mutual objective of increasing organizational sustainability and performance, which in turn will benefit both the organization and the employee association.

Not just in organizations, but a fruitful relation between employee associations and management is also necessary for the universities. In the universities, the employee associations help the University in collecting the perceptions of the influenced employees related to matters of concern to administrators and employees in the University, personal practices and policies, benefits, salaries, operations, and professional activities. Moreover, [Ehrler & Koehnen \(2014\)](#) highlighted that the associations also serve as resources of interested employees in helping the advisory committees and the staff task forces. Besides, they may also help in publicizing information of interest, procedures, and policy to employees and participate actively in the process of academic review. Therefore, the key aim of this research paper is to study the relationship between the employee association and the overall management of universities of Peshawar. Further, it will also identify the significant barriers and issues faced by the employees' associations and organizational management. Below-stated are the identified and productive research objectives that will be considered to complete this research paper successfully:

1. Do employee associations play an important role in universities?

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2. Is there a strong relationship between employee association and organizational management in the universities of Peshawar?
3. What are the different types of barriers and issues faced by employee associations in the universities of Peshawar?

## Literature Review

### Employee Associations and their Significance in Universities

[Hirsch, Macpherson & Vroman \(2001\)](#) highlighted that the organization of employees that are concerned with recreational activities and welfare primarily is referred to as an employee association. In matters of working conditions and compensation, administrative and legislative action may be advocated by employee associations in public employment. It is also important to note that similar legislation that governs employee unions regulate the operation, organization, and the establishment of employer associations. No limitations concerning the type of legal entity to be created, number of employees, work type, and the capital requirements are imposed on associations under this law.

Moreover, the presence of associations has been acknowledged by employers as communicating directly to the employer may be accessible in smaller businesses; however, this becomes difficult when many individuals are employed by the more significant business. Most importantly, considering decisions for a considerable number of employees also becomes quite difficult for the department of human resources; this issue is also taken care of by the association. [Dundon et al. \(2004\)](#) highlighted that when decisions are negotiated with an employee association, it becomes quite easier for the human resource department. This eventually also saves much time for the management since they do not have to meet all of the employees individually and discuss their issues. Besides, fair treatment may also not be given to employees. These employees may be underpaid and overworked. In such cases, the bargaining role can be played by an employee associated with the human resource department for better pay, employment conditions, and working conditions.

In universities, a significant role is played by employee associations. Unlike Employee unions, the existence of employee associations differs a lot. As no public, political, or economic pressures that may be injurious to the University's main interests or may disrupt its operations are advocated by the association. Secondly, it never encourages employees to interfere with the employees' right to make an informed choice or elect or join unions. It also never represents or advocates individual groups or employees in any disputes, complaints, grievances, or negotiations with the management.

[Donaghey et al. \(2011\)](#) suggested that the significance of employee associations is apparent by understanding how effective they are and what are the benefits provided by them. One of the critical functions performed by employer association is that employers are represented by it in the collective bargaining negotiations. Some of the key benefits provided by employee associations are they can share a lot of research facilities and ideas, and they can majorly impact the decisions of the government. Moreover, they can advise on taxation laws, safety and health, and employment laws, and on behalf of their members, they can also negotiate with trade unions.

Some other benefits that may be availed through employee association are to exert pressures and have the capability of impacting the business activities. Along with this, the associations may also help in enhancing the fringe benefits, encourage training, and improve job satisfaction. Some other benefits they may also provide are improving the retrenchment benefits, pensions, and sickness benefits, improved working conditions, and conditions of employment ([Budd, Gollan & Wilkinson, 2010](#)). Lastly, the employee associations can also help in forwarding their perspectives in front of the media for further impacting the governmental decisions related to employment, pay, etc. and they may also enhance the communications between managers and workers.

Employee associations are not only beneficial to the employee but also the employer. Concerning the employer, the advantages are more comfortable to agree to changes, disputes being solved quickly, develop, and creating a better working relationship. A better working relation will indicate fewer organizational disputes, and this will be advantageous to both employers and employees. Lastly, it will also provide clear discussions to the employer. Whereas concerning to the

employee, the association will aid in resolving the problems more quickly and will develop a better working relationship amongst the management and the union ([Batt, Colvin, & Keefe, 2002](#)). Moreover, higher power will be held by the association, and explicit discussions will be provided to the employees.

In universities, an employee association must be present as across the educational sector; education can be defended by them. Moreover, jobs can also be protected by them. However, the association at the University must have experienced local officers who must be further supported by full-time national and regional officials. The association will help in tackling a lot of problems, such as inequalities, workload, fixed-term contracts, reorganization, and redundancy ([Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2002](#)). They will also help in providing consultation about policies and issues related to them.

Most importantly, a voice is provided by the association in universities. Issues that are important to members like equal treatment of fixed-term and part-term employees and the requirements for proper education funding will be communicated by the association to other organizations, professional bodies, and ministers. It also has been shown by the research that in the presence of employees association, the employee gets to have the benefit of flexible working atmosphere and safer workplaces. Their presence contributes to better pension and sickness benefits.

### **The Relationship between Organizational Management and Employee Associations in Universities**

The employee associations mostly represent divergent interests, plus they mostly are on the opposite sides of the bargaining table; therefore, their relation can be highly adversarial at times. However, if there is an improved working relationship between the employee association and organizational management, then many benefits can be gained from their relationship. It is also essential that their relationship addresses some significant elements such as teamwork, proactive policies, regular communication, and mutual respect ([Wilkinson & Fay, 2011](#)). A successful organization is the one that offers better conditions and terms to its employees. Management and employee associations can work together to discuss problems influencing the employees, the employers, and the business.

Besides, with the implementation of proactive employment policies, the relations with employee associations can be improved by the management. This eventually will increase the confidence of the employee association in the working relationship and will also restrain them from placing extra pressure on the management. Besides, conflicts can also be minimized, and the quality of the working relationship can be enhanced through regular and continuous communication between the employee association and management. A conflict-free working relation can be maintained by the association, and the management of the management is communicated continuously with the association, and it is considered while creating the effective strategies for handling market issues, like, increased competition. Lastly, employee associations and organizational management work better together if they both appreciate the fact that the other party may have valued and legal purposes. Employee associations are involved in acquiring the best conditions and terms of employment, whereas the work environment and resources are controlled by organizational management. Employee associations and organizational management must be interdependent as a productive, healthy, and happy workforce is required by the organization for accomplishing their business objectives.

In universities, there are several actions through which it can be seen whether there is a fruitful relation between employee associations and management. These actions are funding of proper operating expenses to the association by the management. Secondly, allowing the associations to use the equipment (paper, mail service, duplicating equipment, meeting rooms, telephone, etc.), supplies, and facilities at zero cost ([Heckscher, 2018](#)). Third, a reasonable amount of time is allowed to the association to be devoted to legal activities of the association by members and officers. Fourth, officers and activities of associations are being encouraged and recognized by the management. This may also involve the exchange of information of interest and perceiving it completely as reasonable communications from members of the association.

It is vital that a practical problem-solving model must be maintained in the University to handle the issues and concerns of management and associations. A fair and efficient manner for resolving disagreements, misunderstandings, disputes, and issues related to management inaction or action influencing any staff member directly will be provided by this problem-solving model. Secondly, it will also help in addressing the complaints related to the failure to apply any guideline, procedure, or policy of the University ([Shore & Coyle-Shapiro, 2003](#)). The complaints may be related to the matters like Discharge and discipline, working conditions, demotion, and abuse of supervisory authority. Along with this, significant elements of dispute resolution must also be well understood and familiar to the employee association and the management of the University. These principal components are: (a) all matters must be held privately by everyone included in the process of dispute resolution, and (b) the right of the staff member to formally proceed must be maintained. This right can be exercised if the informal stage is bypassed by the process and the informal process appears to be unsuccessful. The third component is that resources must be present to staff for providing sufficient assistance in the process of resolution. Fourth, it must be understood that it is in the best interests of the University and the staff (employees) that concerns must be addressed well in a timely and informally manner, and they must be addressed in good faith. Fifth, health, debate, concerns, and questions are encouraged.

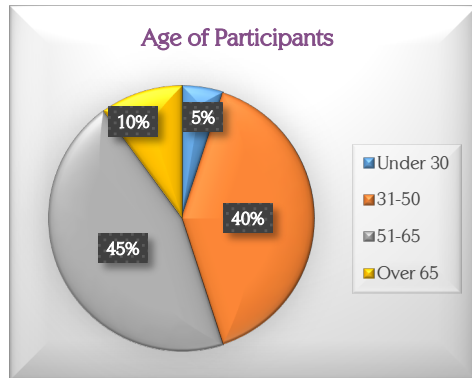
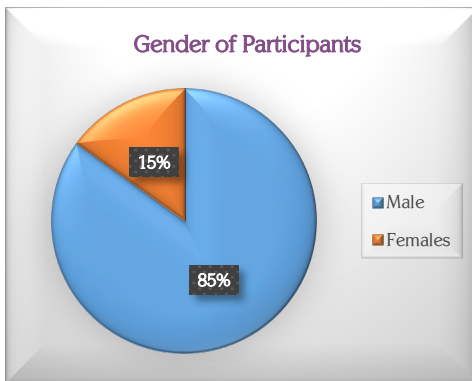
Besides, without fear of reprisal or reprisal or in confidence, the decisions of the management can be questioned by any of the staff members (employee). It is also essential to understand that the complaint of an employee must be heard if there is some disruption within the dispute resolution tribunal. The dispute resolution tribunal means that a dispute may fail to be resolved informally through mediation and discussion or when an employee may bypass this stage. It is also important to note that the decision of the dispute resolution tribunal will be applied to all of the parties that will be involved and will be the final decision. Moreover, it will be a reasonable interpretation of the guideline, procedure, or policy of the University, as it will be applied to the scenario under dispute. It will also be based on related facts.

## Research Methodology

The research onion model by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) has been adopted for the successful completion of the research. The data has been collected through both qualitative (critical literature review) and quantitative method (survey-questionnaire – appendix 1). Further, the results generated from the survey questionnaire has been analyzed through Microsoft Excel. A letter from the employee association and another from the researchers assuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the results have been collected. Since the scope of this research paper is confined to the universities of Peshawar, therefore, the survey questionnaire has been distributed to 200 employees. The questionnaire is based on 10 questions. Further, a 5-point Likert scale has been used to evaluate all of the measurement items. The measurement items involved the importance of employee associations in universities, the relationship between employee associations and organizational management of universities of Peshawar, and the barriers and issues faced by employee associations. The questionnaire has been pretested on a smaller scale to assure a high level of internal validity. Further, all of the ethical concerns have been maintained and addressed. The samples have not been harmed by the research. An explanatory introduction informing the participant about the voluntary nature, anonymity, and privacy of the survey has been provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. Since no sensible data has been inquired, thereby, no harm has been caused to the voluntary participants on a high privacy level.

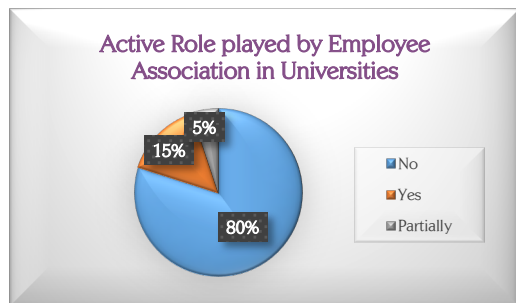
## Results, Analysis and Discussion

Around 100 questionnaires acquired with a response rate of 60%. The majority of the respondents comprised 85% males and 15% females, having an average seniority of 22 years. The majority of the respondents (75%) were between 30 and 60 years of age (under 30, 31-50, 51-65, and over 65).



The survey-questionnaire results briefly addressed the role of the employee association. Concerning an active role played by employee association in addressing the issues of employees, it was found that around majority of them do not agree with it. 80% of the people concluded that employee association has failed massively in communicating their issues to management. Universities in Peshawar failed to revive and engage with their employees, due to which effectiveness was lost majorly by the associations/unions present in the universities.

Next, the interests of employees being acknowledged by the employee association were analyzed, it was found that around 77% of the respondents agreed that yes the employee association has communicated the employees' interests successfully. 18% of the respondents completely disagree with it, whereas, 5% were neutral about it. It was found that the results were not only limited to the interests of employees but also reflected upon the security of employees.



## Discussion

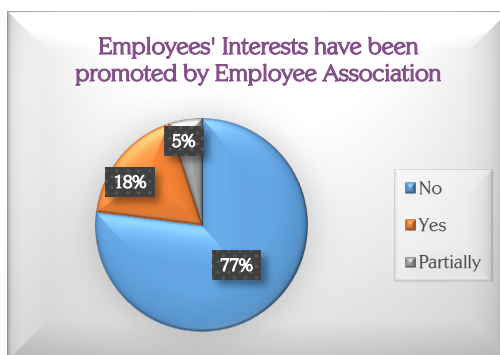
The qualitative data also concluded that the employee association in Pakistan is described as the combination of working individuals whose fundamental objective is to defend and promote the interest and rights of employees in an establishment or an industry (Baig, 2005). Under article 17 of the *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, the right to join an employee association is provided. As per article 17, the right to create unions or associations is given and open to every citizen, subject to any reasonable limitations implied by the law in the interest of integrity or sovereignty of Pakistan, morality or public order. Moreover, as a fundamental right, the collective bargaining and freedom of association are guaranteed by Article 17 of the Constitution.

Further, considering this provision, joining and formation of associations/unions to both the employees and the employers are allowed by Pakistan's labor law. Besides, for settlement of industrial conflicts, a particular law is present in Pakistan, that is, the *Industrial Relations Act*. The law related to the creation of federations of trade unions, trade unions, or associations is consolidated by this act (Ghayur, 2009). Along with the regulations of relations amongst employees and employers and collective bargaining, agents are also determined by this act. Further, the law states clearly that without previous authorization, the right to join organizations of their own choice and to create trade unions is given to employees. The act also provides guidelines regarding how differences or disputes can be settled and avoided. The employees are not even restricted from and joining and creating the unions/associations of their own choice by the *Provincial and National Industrial Relations Act*.

Throughout the year, different reports, regarding teachers being manhandled by the students, were published. One of the prime examples of these incidents was the sports gala disrupted by members of IJT (*Islami Jamiat Talaba*) at the Punjab University. These members were already suspended from the University. A threatening note was also sent by the members of the union to the employees of the universities who were organizing the sports gala. Fifteen members manhandled senior faculty members of the University at the event who forced their entry on campus. A teacher's car was also vandalized in this incident. Not only had the employees of the University but also students studying at the University suffered massively. However, no case was registered because the disruptive group dispersed after the arrival of the police at the incident.

A similar incident happened on 16<sup>th</sup> November at the law college of the Punjab University, where members of IJT attacked the car of an assistant professor. A day earlier, he was also threatened by the members. Along with this, different cases were registered against these members, involving raiding the house of an assistant professor at the University, attacking the car of a lecturer at the University, and firing shots at the house of the Hall Council chairman of the University. However, no one was arrested, and these incidents kept going on. Although in these cases, the criminal factors must be dealt and rooted out as part of any association according to the law, however, the association itself must not be made to suffer.

When asked about whether employee associations will be beneficial to both employers and employees, it was found that around 68% agree that employee association must be present in all of the universities as it can be beneficial not only to the employee but also for the employer. However, 23% did not agree to this statement, whereas, 9% had partial views about it.



## Discussion

The mother educational institution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the University of Peshawar, which, after Independence, emerged as the first-ever University. Since then, the University has been working vigorously with its complete spirit and zeal and serving the sacred cause of education altogether. It is not just addressing the academic needs of Peshawar but also of the complete FATA – *Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas*. Some of the hallmarks of the University are excellent infrastructure, a conducive academic environment, modern curricula, supportive and student-friendly administration, and highly trained and qualified faculty. It is also playing a crucial role in government, industrial, and political leadership. Positive changes are also being brought in society by the overwhelming contribution of the University. The University of Peshawar significantly promotes employee Association.

Next, the critical relationship between employee association and organizational management in universities of Peshawar was analyzed. Around 74% of them responded that a good relationship between employee association and organizational management is absent in universities of Peshawar. 18% acknowledged the presence of the relationship, whereas, 8% had a partial response towards it.



## Discussion

According to [Ahmad & Ghani \(2018\)](#), a disruptive relationship is found between organizational management and employee associations in universities of Peshawar. An incident was reported in

2019, where complete salaries were not paid to the non-teaching and teaching staff of the University of Agriculture of Peshawar. As a consequence of this, employees (staff) going on strike was made at the general body meeting of all Employees' associations. A three-day deadline was set by the combined general body of the non-teaching and teaching staff. This meeting was chaired and headed by the president of AUTA (*Agriculture University Teachers Association*). The meeting was also addressed by the general secretary of the class-IV association, president of the Class-II association, and the president of the administrative officer's association.

Further, the general body was attended by many class-iv and class iii-employees, administrative officers, and many faculty members of the University. This incident also showed that the University's management (administration) failed to pay the salaries of its employees due to the financial issues faced by it. The administration of the University planned to pay only fifty percent of the salaries to all employees. However, this was not accepted by the employees as they were not just expecting their complete salaries but also the bonus of Eid. The employee association and the employees then further requested the provincial government to consider the financial miseries caused to them by the University and propose a bailout package to this issue.

Along with this, they also demanded the administration of the University to take notice of all of the illegal and alleged appointments made in the University in the previous several years. They further demanded strict action against such hires, and those were responsible for the financial crisis faced by the University. Moreover, it was also found that the management of the University maintained an indifferent attitude towards the issues faced by the employees. Severe issues were being faced by the employees of the University that required immediate attention of not just the management and administration of the University but also of the government. The employee association has also been taking these issues to both the government and the administration and management of the University; however, no proper actions were taken.

The employee association and the employees were not only facing issues related to their salaries and wages but also due to the lack of regularization of the contract employees. It was reported that around 640 class four and class three employees are working in the University on a contract basis. Moreover, many teachers (employees) were also serving under fixed pay against the tenure track system. Under the BPS system, the regularization was demanded by them. Besides, issues were also faced by the other employees of the University, teachers, and the families of deceased officers due to not giving them the job to their offspring and non-issuance of salaries. Another issue was the non-issuance of Ph.D., MPhil allowance to employees of the University. Following this, another severe problem was the ban on recruitment imposed on the general body. Temporarily, the significant positions such as treasurer, controller, and Registrar of the University were filled out.

[Takrim & Siddiq \(2016\)](#) also indicated the desired level of attention not received by both the management and employees of the universities in Peshawar over the years. Obsolete organization structure and persistently dogged behavior of the management were reported. The universities lack national human resource policies due to which issues between the University's management and employees' association take place. The employees are managed in the most obsolete and traditional fashion. Only a few numbers of the top management acknowledge these issues.

Last but not least, the barriers and issues faced by employee association were analyzed, it was found that around 81% accepted that fact that numerous of issues are being faced by employee associations in universities Peshawar.

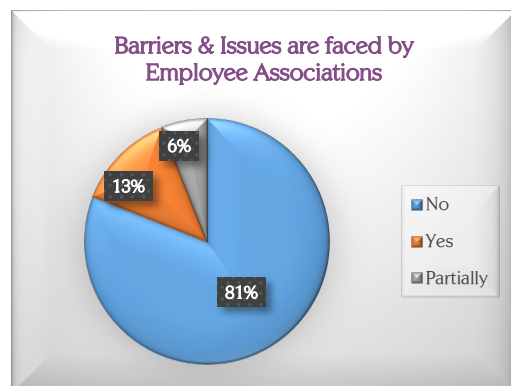


## Discussion

Moreover, one of the most significant barriers faced by employee association was that they were prevented from joining or creating the associations of any independent workers. It required that

specific attention should have been paid to administrative and legal barriers. One of the famous examples of such issues that may arise due to the absence of a better working relationship between organizational management and employee association in universities of Pakistan was the issue when a combined protest of all employee associations of the universities took place against the sacrilegious materials that were uploaded on the Facebook in 2017. Lastly, [Takrim, Siddiq & Amin \(2015\)](#) highlighted some of the most significant barriers are that some of the employees do not support the employee association. They feel that employee associations are making no efforts for their job security. One of the most significant issues faced by the employees is the job stress generated through the increased workload. Moreover, some of the lower-level employees prefer organizational management over employee association for resolving their issues. Some of the employees believe that it is appropriate to have a direct relationship with the management instead of joining employee association. Most importantly, organizational management also uses different tactics to reduce the strength of employee association. Some of these are firing off a massive number of employees, particularly those who are a part of the employee association, giving a high workload to employees, and not giving them salaries.

One of the most significant issues that are generally witnessed in the relationship between employee association and organizational management is the insistence of the management to act immediately. This eventually forces the employee association to implement without the support of the management or back off from what they want. Another issue is that unnecessary strain is placed when the association's way of doing business is not recognized by organizational management. This eventually breaks the trust level amongst the parties. Moreover, it is crucial to understand that the relationship between employee association and organizational management is built upon the development of a high-performance organization, removal of organizational barriers, free flow of information, cultural change, and philosophy of the team. Besides, there must be no venture into the work area whose objectives are different from those set by the relationship between association and management and who do not appreciate the philosophy of partnership. The relationship between employee association and management can run into issues if demand increases and resources decrease. Throughout the relation, a level of trust must be acquired.



## Conclusion

From the above information and analysis, it can be concluded well that in universities, an employee association must be present as, across the educational sector, they can defend education. Moreover, jobs can also be protected by them. However, the association at the University must have experienced local officers who must be further supported by full-time national and regional officials. The association will help in tackling a lot of problems, such as inequalities, workload, fixed-term contracts, reorganization, and redundancy. A lot of significant benefits can be gained from the relationship between employee association and university management. Only if the relationship addresses some significant elements such as teamwork, proactive policies, regular communication, and mutual respect. Management and employee associations can work together for discussing problems influencing the employees, the employers, and the business. In universities, there are several actions through which it can be seen whether there is a fruitful relation between employee associations and management. It has been found that in the past, universities in Pakistan have failed to revive and engage with their employees, due to which effectiveness was lost majorly by the associations/unions present in the universities. Throughout the year, different reports regarding teachers being manhandled by students were published. Currently, positive changes are being brought to manage employee association effectively. The University of Peshawar significantly



promotes employee Association. A Facebook community page recently has been created by the University that promotes new hiring of employees of the University.

Further, it also provides practical guidance and updates to the employees about the University's plans for them. Nevertheless, still, a disruptive relationship is found between organizational management and employee associations in universities of Peshawar. An incident was reported in 2019, where complete salaries were not paid to the non-teaching and teaching staff of the University of Agriculture of Peshawar. As a consequence of this, employees (staff), going on strike was made at the general body meeting of all employees' associations. Some of the significant barriers and issues were also faced concerning this relationship. Amongst them, one of the most significant issues was the lack of support of employees toward employee association.

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