

# THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL DOWNSIZING ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OF AFGHANISTAN

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**Abstract.** *The objective of the study is to measure the impact of downsizing on employee performance while using motivational factors (turnover intention, employee commitment, job security) as moderating variables in private sector Universities of Nagarhar Province, Afghanistan. Data for the study is collected through questionnaire using 5 Likert scale from a sample of 200 faculty members. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among faculty members out of whom 186 were received back. The findings of the study revealed that all motivational factors have a positive impact on employee performance whereas organizational downsizing has a negative influence on employee performance. Moreover, apart from TOI all other independent variables have a significant influence on employee performance. The moderation analysis reveals that motivational factors moderate organizational downsizing impact on employee performance positively.*

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## Introduction

In empirical literature pertaining to Human Resource Management, organizational downsizing has received greater attention from academicians and researchers alike. One most common argument in favour of downsizing by the organization is the expectation of achieving superior financial performance (Datta & Basuil, 2015); however, there are evidences that these expectations are more often than not met primarily due negative reaction by surviving employees who remain in the organization after downsizing (Datta, Guthrie, Basuil, & Pandey, 2010). Prior research focusing on the reaction of surviving employees indicates that downsizing has negative impact on their attitudes which leads to negative impact on their performance (Luthans & Sommer, 1999; Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein, &

Rentz, 2001; Travaglione & Cross, 2006).

In the last few years, organizations around the world have become more competitive and there is greater emphasis on increasing revenue and controlling or lowering cost. Among various strategies to reduced cost, one strategy that commonly used is downsizing where organization layoffs some of its unnecessary staff. In doing so the organization will become more efficient thus enhances its profitability. While aiming to improve organizational performance through downsizing, organizations abolish specific positions and areas of responsibility without affecting its overall performance (Okurame, 2014; Khokhar et al, 2022). Though downsizing reduces organizational cost but at the same time it affects the commitment and performance of employees.

Earlier empirical studies have mostly examined downsizing on surviving employee from the perspective of social exchange theories (e.g., Arshad & Sparrow, 2010; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011) and justice theories (e.g., Brockner, Grover, O'Malley, Reed, & Glynn, 1993; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Kalimo, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2003; Brockner et al., 2004). In some studies stress perspective towards downsizing has also been analyzed. Downsizing not only increases the job demands but also increases the stress level thus affecting the employee's health as well as his performance (Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003; Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2004; Harney, Fu, & Freney, 2018). However, in literature, the impact downsizing on the motivational level of employees has not received due attention. Moreover, it is widely assumed that changes in the motivation level of surviving employees is mostly due to increase in job demands and changes in job resources but in majority of cases these relationships have not been empirically examined. Therefore, in this study we looked at the impact of downsizing on employee performance while using motivational factors (turnover intention, employee commitment, job security) as moderating variables in private sector Universities of Nagarhar Province, Afghanistan.

### **1.1 Higher Education in Afghanistan**

Higher Education sector in Afghanistan remained neglected primarily due to war in the 80s and 90s. Kabul University is first recognized University of Afghanistan. After the new government came into power in 2001, the condition of higher education improved significantly. New Universities and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAI) were opened up in public and private sector. According to Ministry of Higher Education, Afghanistan there is currently 131 private Universities and DAIs in Afghanistan. However, the Covid pandemic and the regime change has significantly affected the economy and the current government is cash starved. Due to this, like many organizations private sector Universities are also affected thus forcing them to downsize their workforce to keep costs down and remain operational.

## **2. Literature Review**

Downsizing of employees involves reduction in personnel in context of organizations to keep costs down (Cascio, 1993). In this study, our focus is on understanding the consequences of downsizing for employees who survive the downsizing drive also termed as “downsizing survivors”. Surviving employees consider downsizing as a stressor (Dervine et al., 2003; Sonnentag & Frese, 2003) and it is mostly witnessed in periods of recessions and economic downturns (Snorraddottir, 2013; Wood Michaelides & Ogbonnaya, 2020). However, downsizing cannot be attributed to as a mere consequence of decline in demand for the products and services offered by the organization because proactive downsizing can also happen in sound economic environment with to objective to bring efficiency and remain competitive in the long-run (Datta& Basuil, 2015).

Empirically, several studies have focused on downsizing and have concluded a negative impact of downsizing on surviving employee's performance (see Andreeva, Hanson, Westerlund, Theorell, & Brenner, 2015; Dragano, Verde, & Siegrist, 2005; Grunberg et al., 2001; Kalimo et al., 2003; Kivimäki et al., 2001; Snorraddóttir et al., 2013) while studies by Osthus (2007) and Osthus (2012) concluded no impact. Moreover, in literature we find evidence on the impact of employee attitude as a consequence of downsizing. Luthans and Sommer (1999) analyzed organizations undergoing downsizing and concluded that organizational commitment and job satisfaction declines among employees as a consequence of downsizing. In a related study, Travaglione and Cross (2006) also found similar findings. In today's competitive and challenging environment organizational downsizing is frequently used by organizations to cut costs and remain competitive (Tu et al., 2021). Although, the objective behind downsizing is to improve organizational efficiency and profitability, its potential impact on employee motivation and performance is still a worry that needs the attention of the managers (Ahuja et al., 2021).

Empirical studies by Spreitzer and Mishra (2002), Brockner et al., (2008), Sheaffer et al., (2009), Asuman and Ayse (2016), Edih et al. (2022) Samreen et al. (2022) found concluded that downsizing leads to stress among surviving employees which can result in lower productivity and organizational commitment. In the long-run downsizing may create a fear among surviving employees as they may think they may next. Hijalda (2021) focused on surviving teachers while measuring the impact of downsizing on employee commitment and concluded that downsizing has negative impact employee attitude, commitment and job satisfaction. Similarly, Mushonga and Ukpere (2022) also found negative impact of downsizing on employee commitment. They further argued that surviving employees lost trust in the management and many employees underwent psychological problems like

mental breakdown and depression during and after downsizing within the organization.

Organizations downsize to make themselves more efficient and compete in a highly competitive environment. However, most of the time if not all the time, employees perceive downsizing negatively and may believe that their jobs are not as secure as they used to be. This perceived notion among employees that job security is not there now forces them to look for other jobs. James and Mathew (2012) concluded that downsizing has a negative impact on job security which affects the performance of employee negatively. Further studies by Kivimaki et al., (2000), Chaudhry et al., (2015), Sigursteinsdottir et al., (2015) confirmed the negative impact of downsizing on job security. Moreover, Heryanda (2019) also concluded that downsizing leads to job insecurity among surviving employees thus turnover intentions are expected to rise. Aurangzeb and Shah (2015) also concluded significant effect of downsizing on employee's job security.

Since surviving employees after downsizing have doubts in their minds are keen to know about further downsizing plans by the management of the organization. These doubts primarily are related to job security of future survival. Frone and Blasi (2020) concluded a positive effect of downsizing on employee turnover as surviving employees sensing their jobs to be insecure looks for other job opportunities. Empirical studies by Ernest (2007) and Erikson and Roloff (2008) also concluded that downsizing has positive impact on employee turnover intentions. Adeoye and Lawrence (2021) emphasized on the importance on transparency during and after downsizing. If the purpose of downsizing is to reduce cost in order to become more efficient than surviving employees must be communicated about future plans career advancement opportunities. This will help surviving employees to remain with the organization otherwise they will intend to turnover.

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework

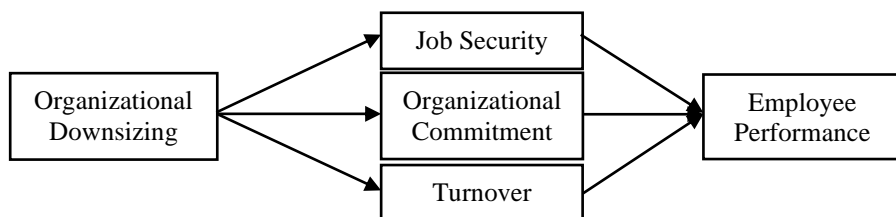


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

## 2.2 Hypotheses

H 1 Organizational downsizing negatively affects employee performance in Afghanistan's private sector Universities

- H 2 Job security positively affects employee performance in Afghanistan's private sector Universities
- H 3 Organizational commitment positively affects employee performance in Afghanistan's private sector Universities
- H 4 Employee turnover intentions negatively affect employee performance in Afghanistan's private sector Universities
- H 5 Organizational commitment, job security and employee turnover intention moderate organizational downsizing's impact on employee performance in Afghanistan's private sector Universities.

### **3. Methodology**

Since the objective of the study is to measure the impact of downsizing on employee performance while using motivational factors (turnover intention, employee commitment, job security) as moderating variables in private sector Universities of Nagarhar Province, Afghanistan, exploratory research design is used in this study in private sector Universities of Nagarhar province, Afghanistan. Private sector Universities involved in this study include Khurasan University, Alfalah University, Altaqwa University, Aryana University and Rokhan University. Data for the study is collected through questionnaire using 5 Likert scale from a sample of 200 faculty members. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among faculty members out of whom 186 were received back. Sample size is calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Furthermore, stratified random sampling is used and 40 lecturers from each University are randomly selected for this study. For measuring individual constructs, standardized questionnaire related to each construct is used with minor modifications in contextual context. Organizational commitment is measured through scale developed by Porter et al., (1974); job security is measured through scale developed by Oldham et al., (1986); turnover intentions is measured through scale developed by Camman, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979); employee performance is measured through scale developed by Ifeoma et al., (2019) and lastly organizational downsizing is measured through scale developed by Kinanga and Cheruiyot (2015). To determine the reliability and validity of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha is calculated for each variable. Cronbach Alpha's results given in table 1 indicate that the instrument used in this study is valid and reliable.

Table 1 *Showing Summary of Reliability Analysis*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>No of Items</b>
Job Security	0.783	10
Job Turnover	0.736	3
Organizational Commitment	0.751	15
Organizational Downsizing	0.744	7
Employee Performance	0.711	8

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics of the Variables*

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Organizational Downsizing	186	1.00	5.00	3.68	0.530
Job security	186	1.00	5.00	3.25	0.456
Turnover Intention	186	1.00	5.00	3.88	0.901
Organizational Commitment	186	1.00	5.00	3.63	0.520
Employee Performance	186	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.775

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables. From the descriptive statistics table we see that the mean of organizational downsizing is 3.68 whereas for employee performance it is 3.25. For job security, turnover intention, and organizational commitment, the mean value is 3.88, 3.63 and 3.92 respectively. The standard deviation of the variables indicates that turnover intention more volatile whereas job security has least volatility among the given variables.

### 4.2 Regression Analysis

Since the objective of the study is to measure the impact of downsizing on employee performance while using motivational factors (turnover intention, employee commitment, job security) as moderating variables in private sector Universities of Nagarhar Province, Afghanistan, multiple regression analysis is used to estimate the relationship. Results from regression analysis given in Table 3 indicate that all independent variables except for organizational downsizing have a positive impact on employee performance. If employees feel that their jobs are secured then they will be more committed to work and hence will perform well on their assigned jobs. Similarly, if an employee is not satisfied with his current job, his intention to turnover will be high and his performance will be low. In this case though the coefficient of TOI is positive indicating that increase in TOI will lead to increase in employee performance, however the strength of the relationship is weak therefore does not warrant any significant discussion on it. Positive coefficient of OC indicates that committed employees perform well on their jobs and it important that the management should make decision in such a way enhances further the commitment of employees to the organization. Lastly downsizing has a negative impact on employee performance. It is quite that downsizing leads to fear among surviving employees that if the condition of the firm does not improve then they might the next line to face downsizing. Empirical studies by Owino et al., (2019) and Arayni et al. (2021) also found positive impact of organizational commitment on employee performance. They further argued that organizations that are treating their employees properly are more productive as their employees are more committed. All independent variables except turnover intentions have a significant impact on employee performance.

Table 3 Regression Results: Dependent Variable = Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.152	0.377		0.40	0.688
JS	0.856	0.056	0.766	15.21	0.001
TOI	0.072	0.078	0.047	0.93	0.355
OC	4.215	1.942	0.289	2.17	0.037
OD	-0.543	0.143	0.292	3.81	0.001

Table 4 presents the moderating impact of motivational factor (organizational commitment, job security and turnover intentions) on organizational downsizing’s impact on employee performance. From table 4 we see that all three motivational factors positively moderate organizational downsizing’s impact on employee performance. However, the impact is significant only in case organizational commitment. For the remaining two motivational factors it is insignificant. Sarah et al., (2017) also found similar finds in their study.

Table 4 Moderation Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.351	0.430		0.816	0.415
OD*JS	0.041	0.129	0.017	0.314	0.754
OD*TOI	0.213	0.115	0.103	1.850	0.066
OD*OC	0.312	0.137	0.149	3.284	0.024

Table 5 Model Summary

R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.617	0.608	0.627

The R square value is 0.617 which means that 61.7% variation in the dependent variable is caused by the independent variables used in this study.

### 5. Conclusion

The objective of the study is to measure the impact of downsizing on employee performance while using motivational factors (turnover intention, employee commitment, job security) as moderating variables in private sector Universities of Nagarhar Province, Afghanistan. Data for the study is collected through questionnaire using 5 Likert scale from a sample of 200 faculty members. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among faculty members out of whom 186 were received back. The findings of the study revealed that all motivational factors have a positive impact on employee performance whereas organizational



downsizing has a negative influence on employee performance. Moreover, apart from TOI all other independent variables have a significant influence on employee performance. The moderation analysis reveals that motivational factors moderate organizational downsizing impact on employee performance positively.

As far as the limitations of the study, the study is limited to private sector Universities of Nagarhar province. Private sector Universities of other provinces were not considered due to time and resource constraints. In future similar studies can be conducted in private educational institutions in other provinces also to determine the impact of downsizing on employee performance. Moreover, the scope of future studies can be expanded to other private sector organizations to determine how downsizing has impacted the performance of employees in those organizations which will help in drawing an overall picture of how downsizing affects employee performance in private sector organizations in Afghanistan.

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