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Effect of Career Advancement Opportunities, Training and Development Programs and Corporate Culture on Employee Loyalty of Alibaba in China

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ABSTRACT

Employee loyalty is an important aspect of business success, especially in organizations that operate in a dynamic environment, such as the e-commerce giant Alibaba in China. Studies have shown that employee loyalty is decreasing. This study attempts to examine the factors that influence employee loyalty at Alibaba. This study examines the influence of career advancement, training and development programs, and corporate culture on employee loyalty. This quantitative study was based on a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach. The target population of this research was 191 employees of Alibaba, China, with at least one year of work experience. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 28.0. The research found that career advancement opportunities and corporate culture are significantly related to employee satisfaction. This study contributes to a better understanding of the influence of career advancement, training, and corporate culture on the loyalty of employees. The results will assist policymakers and managers in improving career advancement opportunities and transforming their organizational culture to increase employee loyalty. The study sample was employees at Alibaba. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited.

1. Introduction

It was reported in a Harvard study that the share of employees with less than 1-year tenure was 16 percent (Bartik et al., 2020). Job hopping is widespread, and more employees are switching jobs and showing less loyalty. The price of lower loyalty is costly to business organizations. Loyal employees make a higher contribution to the success of organizations. They also assist in executing the organization's strategy and work with their colleagues to share the workload (Kullab & Kassim, 2017).

Employee loyalty is a crucial aspect of organizational success. This includes commitment, dedication, and faithfulness of employees to their employers. It goes beyond mere job tenure and represents the extent to which

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employees are emotionally attached to their organizations (Dian Sudiantini & Farhan Saputra, 2022). Loyal employees are willing to invest their time, energy, and effort to contribute positively to their organizations (Chen et al., 2022). Employee loyalty is a multi-layered concept influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which has a collective influence on the attitudes and behaviors of employees within the organisations (Susita et al., 2020).

Numerous factors have been established by the researchers such as effective leadership, compensation and benefits, feedback (Hatwal & Chaubey, 2014), training and development (Jha, 2020), and corporate culture (Abbas, 2017) etc. Among this corporate culture is established to play a pivotal role in shaping employee loyalty. A positive and supportive culture valuing transparency, inclusivity, and employee well-being can promote a sense of belonging and loyalty. Corporate culture is the basis for promoting the collision between corporate values and personal beliefs, and it is also a process of shaping personal beliefs. Corporate culture can promote employee loyalty in terms of supporting and caring about employee benefits. In addition, opportunities for career growth and advancement within the organization are established as powerful drivers of employee loyalty (Kusuma et al., 2022). When employees perceive that their skills and ambitions are nurtured and that they have a path for progression, they are more likely to stay committed (Sutanto & Setiad, 2021). Furthermore, investment in employee training and development programs demonstrates an organization's commitment to its workforce. Such programs not only enhance employee skills but also increase their loyalty by fostering a culture of learning and growth (Muleya et al., 2022). Recently, issues have been raised on Alibaba employee loyalty (Ibarra & Spungin, 2019; Tse & Li, 2022).

Alibaba Group was founded in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province in 1999. In 2014, Alibaba successfully listed in the United States, creating the largest IPO in the history of NASDAQ. Today's Alibaba, as the leader of Internet e-commerce, has become the fifth largest technology enterprise in the world after IBM, Microsoft, Google and Intel after decades of development (Ibarra & Spungin, 2019). The company focuses on building an organizational culture that integrates firmness, collaboration, and creativity. Its massive digital empire has now moved beyond e-commerce, expanding into various aspects of China's global digital economy such as logistics, finance, offline retailing, and cloud computing (Shen & He, 2022). By cultivating a positive organizational culture, promoting employee trust, and enhancing job satisfaction, Alibaba claims to improve employee loyalty towards the organization (Yun et al., 2020).

However, in 2019, Ma Yun, the former president of Alibaba, put forward the "996 working system" which refers to working six days a week, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. every day" and that caused a relatively big storm on the Internet (Yun et al., 2020). Alibaba still attaches great importance to the establishment of its corporate culture, but it is more inclined to the wolf culture in the establishment of its corporate culture, which leads to a faster pace of people as a whole, a higher elimination rate, and higher pressure on employees in the team (Shen & He, 2022). When the pressure faced by employees exceeds the range they can bear, turnover from the current organization will occur, and the employees will be more depressed, have a lower recognition of the organization and the surrounding environment, and their loyalty will also be reduced (Tse & Li, 2022). Furthermore, a previous study established that Alibaba's infectious regular training activities are a "brainwashing" tool for employees' overtime culture (Tupti et al., 2022).

Jack Ma stayed at Alibaba for 2 years and believed every Alibaba employee should have two traits: motivation and loyalty. Loyal employees will give their employer many years of value while they are with the organization (Ibarra & Spungin, 2019). However, there was a large turnover of Alibaba's middle management employees.

Recently issues have been raised on Alibaba employee loyalty (Ibarra & Spungin, 2019; Tse & Li, 2022). This study will examine some of the determinants of employee loyalty.

According to previous research findings, most scholars' research on employee loyalty in China mainly is focused on small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises, lacking in research on employee loyalty in large technological enterprises (Tse & Li, 2022). These organisations are significantly different from Alibaba's employee hierarchy and composition. Alibaba itself is a large, globally renowned enterprise, so understanding the factors that affect the loyalty of Alibaba's employees can fill the gap in research on employee loyalty in large enterprises.

Additionally, the impact of corporate culture on employee loyalty has been generalised. Alibaba has a unique culture of innovation, learning, 996 and other policies (Ibarra & Spungin, 2019). It has become essential to investigate the impact of corporate culture on employee loyalty in Alibaba. This study aims to fill in the research gaps by examining the impact of three factors— career advancement opportunities, training and development programs and corporate culture on employee loyalty in Alibaba, China.

The structure of the paper highlights the literature review section divided into four subsections, each focusing on distinct aspects of Employee Loyalty. Subsequently, the methodology section details the research design, data collection methods, and analytical tools employed in the study. The paper then proceeds to present the research's results and findings, offering a comprehensive analysis of the data gathered. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the implications, significance of the research findings and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty refers to whether employees can selflessly contribute to the organization and work hard and reflects the degree of belonging to the enterprise (Gyawali, 2020). Enterprises can learn about loyalty by measuring and evaluating employees' behaviours and attitudes. The basic premise of loyalty to enterprises is behaviour, while attitude is a sublimation of loyalty to enterprises (Kullab & Kassim, 2017).

According to a previous study, employee loyalty can greatly affect employees' willingness to resign and avoid brain drain (Gyawali, 2020). Another study also suggested that "behavioural loyalty is durable". Employees' initiative to work in the organization can reflect their loyalty (Kullab & Kassim, 2017). Scholars who agree with attitude loyalty say that employee loyalty is mainly reflected in the following aspects: first, they highly agree with the internal culture of the enterprise; second, to maintain appreciation for enterprises (Kullab & Kassim, 2017; Maung, 2022). Another study suggested that employee loyalty should meet the following conditions: First, the welfare treatment within the organization should be fair. The second is the behaviour that can still provide support and help for the development of enterprises (Kullab & Kassim, 2017).

Career Advancement Opportunities

Career advancement opportunities have a profound impact on employee loyalty within organizations. Career advancement opportunities include mentoring, promotions, and skill-building programs that empower employees to enhance their careers and personal growth (Tam & Nguyet, 2021). The relationship between career development and loyalty is well-established in the literature (Sugiono et al., 2021; Tam & Nguyet, 2021). When

organizations align with employee expectations regarding advancement, loyalty tends to increase. Skill development programs contribute to job satisfaction, and employees who perceive investment in their skills are more likely to stay committed. Well-defined career progression paths, including promotions, are linked to higher loyalty, as employees see a clear route for advancement (Nurteja et al., 2022).

Mentoring programs and offering guidance from experienced colleagues enhance loyalty by providing career advice, skill development, and a sense of belonging. Career growth also boosts employee engagement, which in turn, fosters organizational commitment and loyalty. Engaged employees invest in their roles and identify with their organizations (Prihantoro et al., 2022). Organizations that invest in career growth, skill development, and mentoring programs are more likely to cultivate loyalty. Providing employees with career advancement opportunities demonstrates that organizations genuinely care about employee growth. As employees perceive these opportunities and support, they reciprocate with increased loyalty, benefiting both employees and employers (Gyawali, 2020; Nurteja et al., 2022). Also, the findings of research by Nurteja et al. (2022) indicate that it is necessary to offer career and job advancement chances for its employees since this is a key motivating factor. The study by Mayangdarastri & Khusna (2020) and Tam & Nguyet (2021) established the relationship between career advancement opportunities and organizational loyalty among employees working at banks. It also exposes how individuals perceive their organizational loyalty. The study proposes that strengthening these factors will result in better employee loyalty. Most of the studies showed a positive influence of career advancement opportunities on employee loyalty. Hypothesis 1 is presented as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Career Advancement Opportunities and Employee Loyalty.

Training and Development Programs

Training and development programs are a series of training programs provided by the company. These training programs cover the requirements and training of employees' technology, professional ethics, and basic norms. Training is defined as learning activities that help workers improve their present job-related abilities. Muleya et al. (2022) defined training as the planned actions carried out by an organization to transfer information and skills acquired on the job, improve employees' attitudes and behaviours, and further the organization's goals.

Studies have established that the company's training has a definite effect on employee loyalty, and the company can improve employee loyalty through training and development programs. Through the training provided by the company, employees can improve their technical level and realize their industry value (Pradhan, G. M., & Shrestha, P. 2021).

The importance of training and development programs in influencing employee loyalty is crucial in the fast-paced world of e-commerce. Keeping up with new technologies is essential, and training in this area encourages loyalty by preparing staff to deal with changes in technology. Beyond developing skills, training promotes information exchange and employee engagement, which strengthens loyalty by fostering a sense of involvement and contribution (Pradhan, G. M., & Shrestha, P. 2021). A trained, motivated, and dedicated workforce is essential for success in the cutthroat e-commerce environment, and training and development programs in this sector play a complex role in promoting employee loyalty (Lee & Liu, 2021). Hypothesis 2 is suggested as below:

H2: There is a significant relationship between Training and Development Programs and Employee Loyalty.

Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is a set of value systems under which organizations or individuals form ideas, beliefs, and principles that further promote people's behaviour and practice. Corporate culture affects the behaviour of employees within an organization, and employee behaviour also constitutes a part of corporate culture (Sutanto & Setiadi, 2021). Corporate culture has become one of the driving forces behind employee loyalty, making employees more cohesive. Kusuma et al. (2022) believe that the value of the company is the company's culture. Only when the company's employees can accept and recognize the company's culture can the individual goals be combined with the company's goals. The company's culture can penetrate the hearts of everyone and enhance the loyalty and sense of belonging of employees to the company.

Corporate culture has a significant impact on employee loyalty, determining how committed and devoted people are to their work. When an organization's culture is in line with its employees' values, a strong sense of belonging is fostered, which strengthens loyalty. Additionally, by providing chances for empowerment, participation, and acknowledgement, an inclusive culture fosters employee engagement and strengthens loyalty (Nyoman et al., 2017). Faith in leadership and decision-making processes is considerably boosted by trust and transparency in the culture. Loyalty is increased through acknowledging and praising employees' efforts within this cultural framework, and it is also increased by a culture that respects employees' need for a balance between work and personal lives (Lee & Liu, 2021). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is proposed as follows:

H3: There is a significant relationship between Corporate Culture and Employee Loyalty

The study's research framework draws upon two key theoretical perspectives: social exchange theory and self-determination theory. Social exchange theory postulates that individuals engage in relationships based on reciprocity. Thus, in this case, it suggests that employees evaluate the benefits they receive e.g., career advancement opportunities, training, and a positive corporate culture against the costs such as effort and time and decide whether to remain loyal to the organization. This theory can be applied to understand the give-and-take dynamics in the employee-employer relationship. Self-determination theory focuses on the importance of intrinsic motivation and autonomy in promoting employee engagement and commitment. This theory can be applied to investigate how career advancement opportunities, training and development programs, and a positive corporate culture enhance intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, affects loyalty.

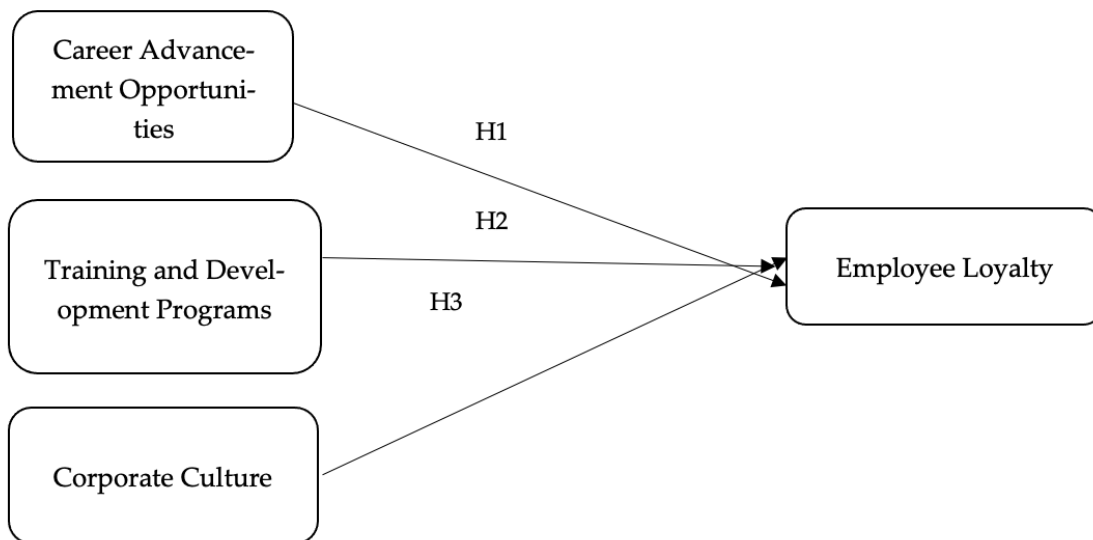


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Data and Methodology

This study intended to increase understanding and comprehension of the topic under investigation. The study was descriptive since the goal was to determine whether or if career advancement opportunities, training and development programs, and corporate culture have any bearing on the loyalty of employees in Alibaba, China. To better comprehend the phenomena through monitoring the population, this study was grounded in positivist philosophy. A deductive approach was therefore employed to construct the theory and hypothesis, which were then put to the test in the research. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the deductive approach, which is frequently applied in quantitative research, is developed based on existing theory.

This study employed a survey strategy to gather data, which was then analyzed as statistics and graphs. Consequently, this research was quantitative. A deductive research approach is often associated with a survey strategy, claim Saunders et al. (2019). Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2019) mentioned that cross-sectional studies are widely employed in the survey technique and that time is always a concern when doing research for academic courses. Consequently, this study is cross-sectional. The sample of this study refers to the current employees in Alibaba with a minimum of 1 year of working experience. The researcher managed to obtain 194 respondents at the end of the data collection period.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28.0 was used for data analysis and data management. The data were used to analyze the validity and the relationship of each of the research hypotheses. Inferential statistics were also used to test the hypothesis to analyze the relationship of each variable by using Pearson's Correlation test and multiple regression analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Normality Test Analysis

Based on Table 1, the skewness and kurtosis value of each variable has been observed. The skewness value of career advancement opportunities was -0.728, while kurtosis value was 1.005. training and development programs skewness was -0.659 and the kurtosis value was 0.250. For corporate culture, the value of skewness was -0.546, while the kurtosis value was 0.210. Lastly, for employee loyalty, the value of skewness was -0.572, while the kurtosis value was 0.516. As shown, the range for the skewness values was between -0.728 and -0.546, while the range for kurtosis values was between 0.210 and 1.005. This shows that the variables were normally distributed as the skewness of the variables in this study falls under the acceptable range of -2 and +2 and the kurtosis value falls within -7 and +7.

Table 1- Descriptive statistics of each variable.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error
Career Advancement Opportunities	1.25	3.00	2.6477	0.49030	-0.728	1.005	0.196	0.390
Training and Development Programs	1.50	3.00	2.9275	0.53106	-0.659	0.250	0.196	0.390
Corporate Culture	2.00	3.00	2.9397	0.42727	-0.546	0.210	0.196	0.390
Employee Loyalty	1.00	3.00	2.9020	0.54958	-0.572	0.516	0.196	0.390

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Reliability Test

Reliability tests were carried out to test the compatibility, reliability, and validity of each item in the dependent and independent variables by conducting a Cronbach's Alpha test. The accepted values for Cronbach Alpha should be above 0.7 and the preferred value is above 0.8.

Table 2- Cronbach's Alpha Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Career Advancement Opportunities	0.741	4
Training and Development Programs	0.931	5
Corporate Culture	0.833	3
Employee loyalty	0.917	5

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Based on the results shown in Table 2 above, the first independent variable, namely career advancement opportunities has a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.741, the second independent variable namely training, and development programs has a value of 0.931, for the third independent variable namely corporate culture was 0.833. As for the dependent variable which is employee loyalty, the value was 0.917. All variables fall within the acceptable range of Cronbach’s Alpha value, which means that the scale used to measure the variables was reliable and significant.

Pearson’s Correlation

Pearson Correlation is used to test the significance of bivariate relationships between the variables. It is especially useful to investigate the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A perfectly positive correlation will be indicated with 1, whereas a perfectly negative correlation will be indicated with -1 [35]. Table 3 below shows the results of the Pearson Correlation test between the variables.

Table 3- Pearson's Correlation Test

		Career Advancement Opportunities	Training and Development Programs	Corporate Culture
Employee Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	0.623	0.352**	0.492**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

As seen from Table 3 above, all independent variable has a positive correlation with Employee Loyalty. Career advancement opportunities had the highest score with a correlation coefficient of 0.623. The least strong relationship with employee loyalty was training and development Programs with a correlation coefficient of 0.352, which indicates that there was a moderate positive relationship between the two variables. All independent variables have a significant threshold of less than 0.001, which indicates the relationship between independent and dependent variables is significant.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the R Square values of the indicators. Looking at the table, the R square value was 0.71, which indicates that 71% of Employee Loyalty y can be explained by all 3 independent variables i.e., Career Advancement Opportunities, Training and Development Programs, and Corporate Culture. However, the remaining 29% represent that can be explained by other factors that were uncontrollable and were not discussed in the research. In this investigation, the R Square values are acceptable and fall into the significant range.

Table 4- R Square.

R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.71	0.65

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

ANOVA Analysis

Table 5 shows the ANOVA analysis for this research. The overall regression for all 3 independent variables is statistically significant and has an impact on Consumer Loyalty, as the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 5- ANOVA Analysis

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.45	3	4.483	17.860	<.001 ^b
	Residual	47.074	187	0.251		
	Total	60.524	190			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Loyalty

b. Predictors: Career Advancement; Training and Development Programs, Corporate Culture

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Coefficients

Table 6 shows the summary of the regression analysis for Graduates' Employability. The p-values for Career Advancement Opportunities and Corporate Culture were 0.000 and 0.012 respectively, which indicates that the two have a significant influence on Employee loyalty. Meanwhile, Training and Development Programs have a p-value of 0.087, which indicates that there is no significant influence on Employee loyalty.

Table 6- Coefficients

		B	Std. Error	T	Sig.(P-value)
1	Career Advancement Opportunities	0.348	0.346	3.61	0.000
	Training and Development	-0.021	0.095	-0.152	0.81
	Corporate Culture	0.311	0.124	2.724	0.012

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

Summary of hypothesis testing

Table 7- Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Coefficient Value (beta value)	Significance (p-value)	Decision
H1: There is a significant relationship between Career Advancement Opportunities and Employee Loyalty	0.348	0.000	Accept (p < 0.05)
H2: There is a significant relationship between Training and Development Programs and Employee Loyalty	-0.021	0.810	Reject (p > 0.05))

H3: There is a significant relationship between Corporate Culture and Employee Loyalty	0.311	0.012	Accept ($p < 0.05$)
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Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

The findings demonstrate that career advancement opportunities are seen to have a significant impact on employee loyalty. Professional advancement aids in the promotion of personal progress on both a professional and personal level. Companies can further grow and focus on career advancement opportunities like leadership, time management, communication management, and team management. The majority of earlier research findings are supported by this research finding. A strong career advancement opportunities and progress system will acknowledge that occupations are static and do not evolve in a vacuum, according to (Susita et al., 2020). Almost all research on employee engagement uses career growth as a predictor of engagement levels because, according to (Dai et al., 2022) it is a factor in predicting loyalty Opportunities for learning are usually beneficial for job advancement. It can boost employees' job security and help them feel like they have a future and an opportunity to advance within the organization. Professional advancement aids in the promotion of personal progress on both a professional and personal level (Chen et al., 2022; Dai et al., 2022; Pshembayeva et al., 2022).

Similarly, corporate culture has a favorable effect on employee loyalty. The findings of this research are congruent with earlier research. The correct corporate Culture can unite people's minds and form high-level loyalty in the employees' psychology (Aboobaker et al., 2021; Tupti et al., 2022). This means that the better the implementation of the organizational culture adopted by each employee, the higher the employee loyalty attitude in Alibaba. In such a culture, employees willingly invest their time, energy, and dedication because they perceive their contributions as meaningful and aligned with the organization's mission.

Regarding training and development programs, training benefits businesses by lowering production errors and raising productivity. Also, training possibilities in another study were found to satisfy workers' needs for professional growth. Employees who possess the most fundamental professional abilities will be more driven to finish their work more effectively, to accomplish more goals, to want to take on more difficult tasks, and to seek out more promotion chances ("Exciting Career Development Opportunity for Early Clinicians," 2022; Muleya et al., 2022). However, despite training programs being established as a crucial element of employee performance, this research did not establish its significant impact on employee loyalty. This suggests that the training may enhance the performance of the employees, but it does not necessarily suggest that the employees will be loyal to the organizations. This also supports the finding from one of the studies that more training can result in employees moving to other organizations (Alrawabdeh, 2014). The environment and sector in which the company is located might also be responsible for the inconsistent findings of this study. In a sector that is evolving quickly, perhaps training cannot fix all of the problems.

5. Conclusion

This research supports the positive influence of career advancement opportunities and corporate culture on employee loyalty. There are both theoretical and practical implications emanating from this study. To the knowledge of the research, this is one of the first studies that examined the influence of career advancement, training, and organizational culture on employee loyalty in a giant e-commerce organization. This study added

to the current state of knowledge on the relationship between the variables. There are some new insights from this study particularly the insignificant role of training and development.

From the practical perspective, the findings of this study have implications for organizational policymakers and the management of business organizations. The study also suggests that companies should focus on Career Advancement Opportunities for the employees by fostering a culture of respect and two-way communication. They should provide employees with development opportunities regularly, which is increasingly becoming important due to changes in the external factors and internal goals of the employees. Having a positive, inclusive culture and career advancement opportunities can have a significant impact on employees' loyalty.

Limitations and Recommendations

Like any other research, there were some limitations related to this study. Firstly, this study did not examine the different types of culture. Cultures such as advocacy culture and clan culture can provide a wider perspective of the impact on employee loyalty. Secondly, this study did not consider the dimensions of loyalty. The two dimensions of loyalty, internal and external, can provide a better understanding of the construct. The internal dimension is the emotional dimension. It encompasses feelings of caring, affiliation, and commitment. The external dimension refers to the way loyalty manifests itself. This dimension includes the employee behaviors that are related to the emotional dimension of loyalty. Thirdly, this study did not include the effect of categorical variables such as age and gender. Future studies should examine the moderating effect of the categorical variables. Lastly, this study only had three determinants of employee loyalty. Therefore, future studies may also increase the scope of the research to investigate the other factors that might influence employee loyalty such as employee engagement and work-life balance.

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