

Article

Transformational Training Programs and Quality Orientation of Employees: Does Employees' Loyalty Matter?

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Received: 31 December 2017; Accepted: 5 February 2018; Published: 9 February 2018

Abstract: Transformational training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation of employees have been some of the important concerns for both academicians and practitioners for decades. Yet, little is known about their underlying relationship dynamics, especially in the context of higher education institutions. The pivotal aim of this study was to investigate the interplay of transformational training programs, loyalty and quality orientation of employees. For this, a causal model demonstrating the direct and indirect relationships of transformational training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation was built and tested. Data for this study were collected from 212 ($n = 212$) academics (deans, head of departments and faculty members) from all private sector universities in Amman, Jordan, through a cross sectional survey. Results indicated that both direct and indirect effects of transformational training programs on quality orientation of employees were significant. More specifically, the positive effects that transformational training programs have on quality orientation of employees are through employee loyalty. This finding significantly advances the existing body of knowledge and implies that transformational training programs enhance employees' loyalty which, in turn, escalates employees' orientations towards quality. Hence, it is concluded that the objective of inculcating quality orientation amongst employees cannot be achieved with mere reliance upon transformational training programs. Several contextual factors, such as employee loyalty, should also be focused on and fostered to ensure the effects that training programs have on certain desirable outcomes.

Keywords: transformational training programs-TTP; quality orientation of employees-QOE; employee loyalty-EL; universities; Jordan

1. Introduction

In today's highly dynamic and competitive environment, 'quality orientation' has emerged as an important concern for organizations. Therefore, every organization, despite its nature and scale of operations, strives hard to address the very concern as it is perceived as a 'mantra' of firms' ultimate survival in ruthless competition. This is why, researchers and practitioners devote considerable attention to understand this phenomenon. Quality orientation refers to a set of attitudes and behaviors that affect the quality of interaction between the staff of any organization and its customers and its commitment to continuous improvement during the delivery of customers' perceived quality and to achieve customer satisfaction [1]. However, as a management practice, it points to the conscious efforts of an organization towards achieving high levels of service quality and customer satisfaction. That is why quality orientation plays a fundamental role in improving service quality, service delivery and customer satisfaction [2]. Given this, quality orientation is perceived as a key strategic resource of

improving organizational performance [3]. Researchers opine that high-quality orientation coupled with systematic planning and monitoring offers numerous benefits, such as increased productivity and amplified organizational performance [4]. That is why, perhaps, organizations embrace 'quality orientation' as an integral element of their business philosophy [3].

Quality orientation is not only an issue of manufacturing concerns, but, also an important concern for the managers of service sector organizations. Scholars dully recognize the importance of quality orientation for service sector organizations. According to them, quality orientation is an important tool that helps achieve competitive advantage, yet it is one of the least researched topics, especially in the service sector [5]. The service sector, by and large, capitalizes upon its human resource to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. Review of relevant literature reveals that knowledge and skill sets of an organization's employees are key to its performance, competitiveness and advancement. Therefore, firms develop and enhance quality of their human resource through appropriate trainings and development initiatives [6]. However, training programs that are consistent with employees' needs, organizational goals, and business strategy tend to be more successful than those that are not [7]. Studies indicate that effective training programs can significantly affect employee satisfaction and loyalty [8], which are some of the most essential ingredients for a superior service quality and organizational success [9,10].

However, a critical review of substantial body of literature on 'quality orientation' reveals that no attempt has yet been made to ascertain whether or not, the transformational training programs affect quality orientation of employees, and if they do, how? Also, what role does employee loyalty plays in this nexus? This study aims at bridging this knowledge gap by finding out the answer of a major question: 'what effects trainings programs have on quality orientations and what is the mechanism of such effects?' The answer to this question would not only provide new insights on underlying relationship dynamics of training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation, but would also offer several practical implications that, if acted upon, would help practitioners and policy makers to help achieve the bottom line objectives of organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Transformational Training Programs (TTP)

Training is a content-based activity, generally away from the workplace, with a coach leading and aiming to modify a person's behavior or attitude [11]. Training programs can be defined as "planned efforts that are aimed at increasing individual skills [6]. Training programs are also referred to as systematic processes of changing the behavior of employees towards achieving organizational goals [12]. Trainings are vital for organizations as they are a source of increasing intellectual capital and escalating employee commitment [13]. Transformational training programs, on the other hand, are a bit different. The objective of transformational training programs is not to change individual behaviors, but to change the way learners think about new knowledge or skills. A plethora of empirical evidence is available on consequences and outcomes of training. McFarlane in his study investigated the consequences of training programs and explored trainees' reactions towards training goals, content, material, trainers, environment, training process and trainees' acquired knowledge and skill sets. He concludes that all these factors play very important role in determining perceived usefulness of training programs [14]. Another study concludes that training programs equip trainees with a determined level of knowledge and skills and shape their behaviors and actions to a desired level [15]. Alawneh demonstrated importance of several contextual factors in determining training transfer [16]. A study worth mentioning here was performed by Kirkpatrick. He identified four levels of training evaluation, namely: (i) reaction criteria; (ii) learning criteria; (iii) behavior criteria; and (iv) results criteria [17].

- (1) *Reaction criteria*: Reaction criteria are trainees' perceptions of training programs in organizations [17]. In higher education institutions, the reaction of participants is usually judged

through self-reporting. This method asks trainees to report advantages and disadvantages of training programs [18]. Such criteria is widely used because of its ease [19].

- (2) *Learning criteria*: Learning criteria, in higher education institutions, is assessed through learning outcomes and is evaluated by conducting several tests to measure: performance, presentation, and demonstration of learned skills [20]. A variety of assessment techniques, such as speeches and writing samples are used to assess the extent of learning [21].
- (3) *Behavioral criteria*: Behavioral criteria measure the performance of trainees on their actual jobs [22]. In higher education institutes, behavioral criteria usually base upon performance indicators such as work-related outcomes. Application of skills and knowledge gained from training programs in research projects is an example of behavioral criteria in higher education institutions [23].
- (4) *Results criteria*: Results criteria in organizational settings are measured through different benchmarks, such as: efficiency, productivity and profitability [23]. Results criteria in higher education is measured by assessing the competence level of students [24].

2.2. Employee Loyalty (EL)

Loyalty is a two-way path. If an organization desires its employees to be loyal, they must earn it by creating a stable and challenging workplace [25]. Scholars opine that loyalty is an emotional assurance of employees' ambition to involve and remain determinedly constant and responsible with the organization [26]. Researchers hold different views about loyalty. For some, employee loyalty is an action-oriented approach which deals with the behavior of employees [27]. Whereas, for others, it is the commitment that employees have for their organizations [28]. Martensen and Grønholdt [29] note that the fundamental principle underlying the concept of employee loyalty is emotional attachment [30]. However, some of the researchers identify two basic approaches to determine employee loyalty, namely: the attitudinal approach, and the behavioral approach. From attitudinal perspective, loyalty refers to an individual's psychological inclinations, feelings, identification, attachment or commitment to the organization [31,32]. However, the cognitive nature of attitudinal approach makes the measurement of loyalty difficult and questionable [31,33,34]. Whereas, behavioral approaches view loyalty as an observable phenomenon that is obvious and can be easily materialized in the context of employee-organization relationships [35,36]. Researchers also explain that employee loyalty is a major driving force behind the sustainable development of organizations [37,38].

Cook [39] advanced the body of knowledge on loyalty by introducing a taxonomy of employee loyalty. According to him, employee loyalty can be categorized either as active or passive. First refers to the subjective feelings and desires of employees to stay with an organization. Such subjective feelings and desires arise when employees feel that organizational goals are congruent with their own. Whereas, the latter (passive loyalty) is that state of mind or phenomenon which captures employees' dissatisfaction. A worth discussing fact here is that, despite being dissatisfied, employees do not want to leave organization due to some lucrative benefits that they get (e.g., high wages). If these conditions disappear, employees no longer remain loyal to their organizations. Meschke [40] revamped Cook's taxonomy by introducing the concept of 'tripartite employee loyalty'. According to Meschke, loyalty revolves round three objects: supervisor, working group, and the organization. These objects should be kept in view while investigating the outcomes of employee loyalty. However, an employee's loyalty towards different reference objects may conflict with each other [41]. This point is conceivable as employees do not display the same loyalty towards their supervisor, working group, and organization at the same time. Rather, it is likely that their loyalty towards one or more of these reference objects differs due to their potential outcomes such as: openness to leave, openness to reapply, and openness to change. Hence, a valid and reliable measure of employee loyalty is inevitable [40].

2.3. Quality Orientation of Employees (QOE)

Quality orientation, as a construct is dynamic and abstract in nature. There exist two main perspectives on quality orientation of employees (QOE). First perspective view it as a 'business

philosophy', whereas, the latter considers it as a 'managerial practice'. Despite of their differences, both perspectives view QOE as an essential ingredient of organizational success. Proponents of first perspective argue that quality-oriented firms manage and control internal processes to ensure quality products and services to the customers which is ultimate for organizational success [41]. Perhaps, this is why, quality orientation has become an emerging business philosophy as it helps achieving and sustaining competitive advantage [42]. Quality orientation depicts a philosophical commitment of an organization to developing and maintaining a sustainable quality-based competitive advantage leading to increased business performance [43]. Dahlgaard and Mi Dahlgaard-Park explored the aim of this philosophy and found that it could change organizational culture from passive and defensive to proactive and open culture with an open participation of every organizational member [44]. Therefore, it is essential to formulate quality orientation philosophy at the time when organizations begin to look up for competitive superiority through customer satisfaction with its quality products and services [43].

The latter perspective, on the other hand, defines quality orientation as a managerial practice as well as an employee behavior which is oriented towards achieving high levels of service quality and customer satisfaction [5]. This perspective stresses that quality orientation plays fundamental role in service delivery, and that quality orientation behaviors foster service excellence and assure customer satisfaction [3]. Quality orientation of any organization is also linked to a widespread understanding among organizational members about the importance of quality [45,46].

3. Hypotheses Development

Many scholars have investigated the effects of transformational training programs on certain attitudinal outcomes [47]. For instance, a study evaluated the impact of transformational trainings on employees' satisfaction and found them positively associated. Moreover, this study uncovered that the trainees' motivation towards a transformational training program can have significant positive effects on certain attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction) [48]. Another study by Sivanathan and colleagues [49] explored how transformational training interventions improve occupational safety. Results of this pre-test/post-test quasi-experiment involving swimming pool supervisors and swim instructors revealed that transformational training interventions significantly improved instructors' perceptions about their supervisors' behaviors regarding safety compliance. Also, it was revealed that the change in instructors' perceptions of their supervisors' behaviors served as a mechanism through which changes in safety behaviors occurred. Duygul and Kublay [50] examined effects of transformational training programs on nursing practices (inventory management). Results indicated significant improvements in the inventory management practices of nurses after attending transformational training programs. Another study by Owoyemi and colleagues [51] explored the relationship between training programs and employees' commitment. Results of this survey of 250 employees revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between training and employees' commitment. Based on this evidence, we also expect that transformational training programs would be positively related to employee loyalty and their quality orientations. Therefore, we propose that;

Hypothesis 1. *Transformational training programs would be positively associated with quality orientation of employees.*

Hypothesis 2. *Transformational training programs would be positively associated with employee loyalty.*

A study by Antoncic and Antoncic [52] investigated the relationship between employee loyalty and firm's growth. Findings indicate that employee loyalty and firm growth are positively associated. Czyż-Gwiazda [53] tested the interrelationships between business process orientation, maturity level and the level of quality orientation implementation and found that business process orientation, maturity level and the level of quality orientation implementation had strong associations between them. Therefore, we also posit that:

Hypothesis 3. *Employee loyalty would be positively associated with quality orientation.*

As discussed earlier, the pivotal aim of this study is to investigate the interrelationships among transformational training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation of employees. Though the arguments in support of Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 clearly demonstrate the connections between major study variables, however, the mechanism through which transformational training programs relate to quality orientation of employees is yet to be conceptualized. We assume that employee loyalty serves as a mechanism that connects transformational training programs and quality orientations. The rationale behind this assumption is that transformational training programs enhance employee loyalty which then induces quality orientations. Therefore, we propose;

Hypothesis 4. *Employee loyalty would mediate the relationship of transformational training programs and quality orientation.*

The dynamics of major study variables are shown in Figure 1.

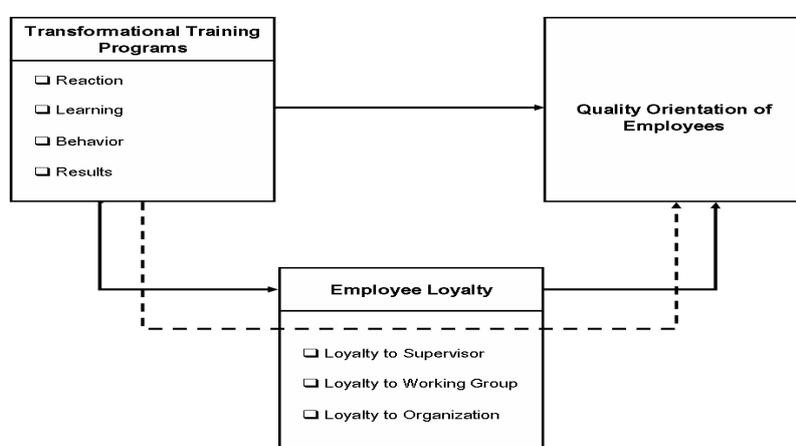


Figure 1. Research Model.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design and Sample

Since the purpose of this research was to understand how transformational training programs enhance quality orientation of employees. More specifically, this study intends to empirically investigate the relationship/effect of transformational training programs on quality orientation of employees with the mediating effect of employee loyalty. Correlational design best serves this purpose, hence, this study adopts a correlational design to investigate the relationships dynamics of transformational training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation of employees. The population of the current study consisted of academics working in private Jordanian universities in Amman City, the capital of Jordan. Due to cost, time and access constraints, probability sampling was not possible. Therefore, convenience sampling technique was applied to approach respondents. Participants were approached in their native work settings and were given a self-reported questionnaire to fill. All respondents were briefed about the aims of this study and were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses will be analyzed and reported as group data without disclosing their identities. A total of 225 respondents, including deans, heads of departments and faculty members, participated in this study, out of which 13 questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information (missing responses) and 212 duly filled surveys were retained for further analysis. Table 1 contains the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile.

Variables	Dimensions	Frequency & %
Gender	Male	145 (68.4%)
	Female	67 (36.6%)
Age	Less than 30 Years	17 (08%)
	30–39 Years	35 (16.5%)
	40–49 Years	103 (48.6%)
	50 years and above	57 (26.9%)
Experience	Less than 5 years	11 (5.2%)
	5–9 Years	97 (45.8%)
	10–19 Years	61 (28.8%)
	20 years and above	41 (20.3%)
Job Titles	Dean	29 (13.7%)
	Head of Departments	62 (29.2%)
	Faculty	121 (57.1%)

4.2. Measurement of the Constructs

The items for measuring constructs were drawn from the literature. Specifically, the scales developed and validated by previous researchers were used to gauge respondents' perceptions. Scale items were slightly modified according to the context of present study. 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) was used to rate scale items. Respondents were asked to indicate levels of their agreement or disagreement with question statements given in the survey. The items to measure transformational training programs were adapted from Al Qudah, et al. [54]; this scale consisted of 13 items and showed a composite reliability of 0.925. Employees' loyalty was measured with the help of an 18 items scale developed and validated by Meschke [40], composite reliability of this scale in our study was 0.972. Quality orientation of employees was measured with the help of a 10 items scale developed by Alrubaiee, et al. [3], this scale showed an overall reliability of 0.899 in present context. Composite and dimension wise reliability coefficients (cronbach alpha) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis.

	Cronbach's Alpha		CR
	No. of Items	Value	
Reaction	3	0.823	0.72766
Learning	4	0.859	0.78089
Behavior	3	0.812	0.86530
Results	3	0.808	0.78046
Transformational Training Programs	13	0.925	-
Loyalty to supervisor	6	0.898	0.83674
Loyalty to working group	6	0.874	0.85623
Loyalty to organization	6	0.887	0.80544
Employee loyalty	18	0.972	-
Quality Orientation of Employees	10	0.899	0.86561

SPSS version 22 was used for data analysis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) technique, using AMOS 22, was applied to test articulated hypotheses. The reliability of all scales was tested once again in order to verify whether or not the transformational training programs, employee loyalty and quality orientation of employees constructs show internal consistency in AMOS. The values of CR (composite reliability) as shown in Table 2 verify that all CR values were higher than the threshold level of 0.7 [55].

5. Results

5.1. Model Fit

As stated above, structural equation modeling (SEM), using AMOS 22, was run to test the hypotheses and to assess the effect and significance level of each path in research model. First of all, an overall model fit was determined by running confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Several fit indices were calculated to determine the degree to which structural equation model fits the sample data. Obtained values of model fit indices proved the goodness of fit. The values of fit indices, as shown in Table 3 were reported as: $\chi^2/df = 1.647$, goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) were 0.912 and 0.972 respectively, the normed fit index (NFI) was 0.916 and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) was 0.954, the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.965 and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.055. All reported values indicated a good fit between theoretical model and data [56–58]. Figure 2 shows the results of structural equation modeling.

Table 3. Overall fit indices of Structural Model with all Constructs.

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Default model	172.898	105	1.647	0.912	0.927	0.916	0.954	0.965	0.055
Saturated model	0.000	0		1.000		1.000		1.000	
Independence model	2059.518	136	15.144	0.348	0.267	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.259

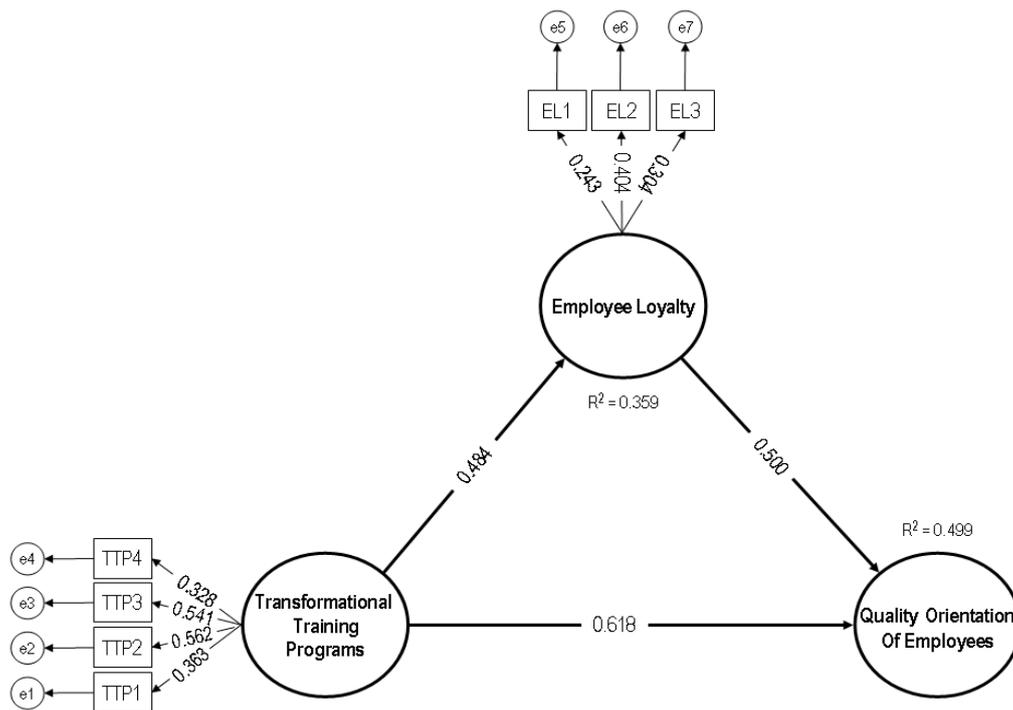


Figure 2. Result of structural equation modeling (SEM).

5.2. Hypotheses Testing

5.2.1. Independent Variable → Dependent Variable

Table 4 represents the effect of independent variable (transformational training programs) on a dependent variable (quality orientation of employees). Results show that transformational training programs can significantly predict quality orientation of employees ($\beta = 0.618$, C.R = 8.704; p -value = ***). These evidences provide enough support for H1.

Table 4. Direct affects Testing Result (Independent variable → Dependent variable).

Hypothesis	Regression Weights		Estimate	SE	C.R.	p Value	Hypothesis
	From	To					
H1	TTP	QOE	0.618	0.071	8.704	***	Accepted

Note: *** $p < 0.05$.

5.2.2. Independent Variable → Mediating Variable

The effect of transformational training programs on employee loyalty are shown in Table 5. Results show that transformational training programs can significantly predict employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.484$, C.R = 6.315, p -value = ***) Hence, H2 is supported.

Table 5. Direct affect Testing Result (Independent variable → mediate variable).

Hypothesis	Regression Weights		Estimate	SE	C.R.	p Value	Hypothesis
	From	To					
H2	TTP	EL	0.484	0.076	6.315	***	Accepted

Note: *** $p < 0.05$.

5.2.3. Mediating Variable → Dependent Variable

It is clear from Table 6 that the effects of employee loyalty on quality orientation of employees are significant ($\beta = 0.500$, C.R = 6.849; p -value = ***). Hence, H3 is supported.

Table 6. Direct affect Testing Result (Mediate variable → Dependent variable).

Hypothesis	Regression Weights		Estimate	SE	C.R.	p Value	Hypothesis
	From	To					
H3	EL	QOE	0.500	0.073	6.849	***	Accepted

Note: *** $p < 0.05$.

5.2.4. Independent Variable → Mediate Variable → Dependent Variable

The indirect effects of transformational training programs on quality orientation are summarized in Table 7 and Figure 3. As indicated by results, indirect effect of transformational training programs on quality orientation of employees (0.173) are significant which indicates that employee loyalty has significantly mediated the relationship between transformational training programs and quality orientation of employees. Hence, H4 is supported.

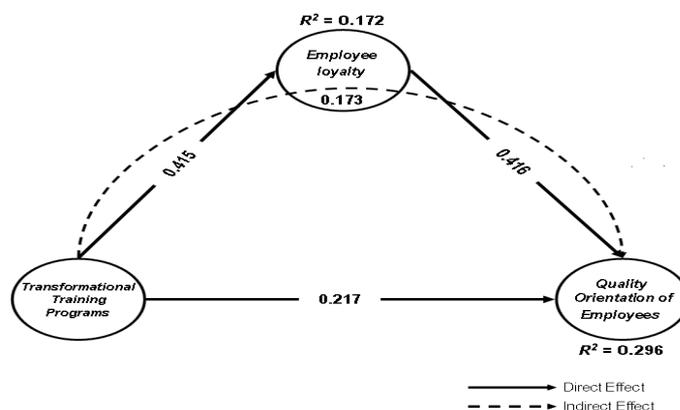


Figure 3. Result of indirect effects.

Table 7. Indirect Effects (Independent variable → mediate variable → Dependent variable). (Mediating effect of Employee loyalty in the relationship between transformational training programs and quality orientation of employees).

Hypothesis	From	Mediation	To	Direct Effect			p Value	Indirect Effect	SMC	p Value	Results
				From	To	Value					
H4	TTP	EL	QOE	TTP	QOE	0.217	***	0.0173	EL = 0.172 QOE = 0.296	***	Mediating
				TTP	EL	0.415	***				
				EL	QOE	0.416	***				

Note: *** $p < 0.05$.

6. Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

6.1. Discussion

This study investigated the interplay of transformational training programs, employees' loyalty and quality orientations. Four hypotheses were articulated for testing. First hypothesis claimed a positive relationship between transformational training programs and quality orientation of employees. Results provided enough empirical evidence in support of this hypothesis. As expected, a significant positive association was found between transformational training programs and employees' quality orientation, which implies that transformational training programs augment attitudinal orientations of employees. These results are consistent with the findings of Barling, et al. [47] and Owoyemi, et al. [51], who also found that training is a significant factor in developing and shaping the desirable attitudes of employees. Hence, it can be asserted that organizations should launch effective training programs to reap the benefits of desirable attitudinal outcomes. We, in hypothesis two, posited that transformational training programs would also be positively associated with employee loyalty. Results also supported this supposition. Results indicated that transformational training programs significantly enhance employee loyalty. The rationale behind this relationship could be the fact that benefits of training programs are twofold, that is, training programs not only improve existing knowledge base and skill sets of employees, but also bring a positive change in employee attitudes. Training opportunities make employees feel that the organization is concerned about them, this feeling in turn results in increased levels of satisfaction and loyalty to the organization. This finding is consistent with that of Sivanathan, et al. [49] who also opined more or less similar. According to them, transformational training programs have significant impacts on the satisfaction and motivation levels of trainees.

Likewise, hypothesis three posited that employee loyalty would positively relates to employees' quality orientations. This hypothesis was also supported. Employee loyalty was found positively associated with quality orientation which means that employees with an attitudinal inclination of loyalty for their firm are more likely to exhibit factorable behaviors geared towards attainment of general goals of the firm such as high-quality service orientation for customers. This finding is consistent with the findings of Antoncic and Antoncic [52] who report a positive relationship between employee loyalty and firm's growth.

Finally, results also indicated that employee loyalty significantly mediated the relationship between transformational training programs and quality orientation of employees (H4). This con notes that employee loyalty serves as mechanism through which transformational training programs are related to quality orientation of employees. In other words, it can be explained as training improves employees' loyalty which, in turn, triggers their orientation towards quality. This finding, to some extent, is consistent with the findings of Ismail, et al. [59] who confirmed that the empowerment being one of the components of loyalty to the organization, mediates the relationship between transformational training and service quality.

6.2. Implications

This study significantly advances the existing body of knowledge in many ways: (i) drawing on the literature, it develops and tests a causal model that redefines how transformational training programs relate to quality orientations especially in middle eastern context; (ii) it also bridges a substantial knowledge gap by explaining the nature and dimensionality of relationships between study variables and, by doing so; (iii) this study highlights empirical utility of training programs in the workplaces. From a practical perspective, this study invokes managers' attention towards training programs and their beneficial concomitants (outcomes) such as: loyalty and quality orientations. The confirmation of the mediating role of employee loyalty also bears important implications for the management. That is, the management of organizations should focus on fostering employee loyalty, as without it the bottom line objective of quality cannot be reached. Moreover, management should also be concerned about training programs as they drive employee loyalty which consequently

enhances quality orientation of employees. Building on this, top management of private Jordanian universities may use the framework of this study to develop relevant and effective strategies and tactics to enhance quality orientation of their staff. In addition, the management should endeavor to develop an organizational climate that can promote organizational citizenship behavior and enhance a positive quality orientation of employees. These findings are of particular significance because this study was conducted in a Middle East country (Jordan) which significantly differs from developed nations such as the US, China or European countries in terms of culture, organizational settings and demographic characteristics. Therefore, we believe, this study has made useful contributions to the debate on benefits of transformational training programs for universities in dynamic environments.

However, these findings must be interpreted in light of certain limitations. Since this study was conducted in Jordan, results cannot be generalized to other areas. Moreover, the prime objective of this study was to provide firms with a general guideline on how transformational training programs could enhance employees' loyalty and quality orientation, therefore, it only characterizes the ends instead of the entire continuum. The possibility of social desirability bias during data collection cannot be ruled out, hence, future researchers could substantiate results of this study by adopting a 360 degree approach of data collection. Given its cross sectional nature, this study also limits the possibilities of determining reverse causality, so we recommend longitudinal design in future studies.

6.3. Conclusions

Training programs offer prime opportunities for expanding the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees which are the potent agents of achieving organizational objectives (e.g., improved quality of products and services, customer satisfaction and organizational effectiveness). Hence, every organization, despite its nature and scope, should invest in training. As proven, employee loyalty is another resource which positively contributes towards attainment of organizational goals, therefore, efforts should be made to enhance this viable resource.

Acknowledgments: We appreciate anonymous reviewers, for their valuable feedback and comments during review process.

Author Contributions: Nidal Al Qudah conceived the idea of this study, collected and analyzed relevant data and prepared an initial draft of paper; Yang Yang provided intellectual guidance on the conduct of this study; and Muhammad Adeel Anjum wrote this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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