Empowerment as a Basic Step in Upgrading Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Case Study on Public Sector in Iran

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Abstract: Human resource is the only intellectual being that has a basic role within other factors as coordinator of organizational elements. Thus, human resources play an indispensable role in any kind of development, growth and evolutions as well as in any sort of stasis, reduction and failure of organizations. In this article, employee empowerment as a way of improving human force and as an effective factor of organization's productivity through enhancing their commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors are investigated. The sample of 224 employees in public sector provided the data. The results of the present investigation illustrated that there is a significant relationship between empowerment with both organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and also between workers organizational commitment and their OCBs.

Key words: Empowerment • Organizational Commitment • Organizational Citizenship Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays human life is overwhelmed with wonderful evolutions and great revolutions. Organizations should prepare themselves as a subset of human life in order to survive and also confront these variations. This qualification should be more than obtaining equipments and facilities which encompasses the mobilization of human force as the main capital and value of any organization. Human resource is accounted as the most important resource of organizations and based on existing evidence; human resource lacks sufficient power and authority inside the organizations especially in public sector, requiring more freedom and more autonomy in their workplaces. Organizations, on the other hand, have vertical hierarchies, control systems, concentrated power in top levels, red tapes and lack of proper motivation system. Currently, public institutes are characterized with rigid laws, more bureaucracy, low efficiency, effectiveness and have personnel with low sense of responsibility [1], whereas employees in the challenging world full of changes should be flexible, entrepreneur, more responsible and autonomous. Basic changes must be occur in organizational structure so that employees participate more in decision making and constitute work teams more often and more authority should be assigned to personnel.

Empowerment: Empowerment refers to a situation in which individuals they perceive that they can run their work-related fates and they can achieve both individual and organizational objectives. Although, the concept of empowerment has entered to management literature and organizational psychology at the end of 1980s, but historical investigations show that the concept was not new but rooted in decades and even centuries ago. By surveying management and organization definitions in the literature, empowerment could be classified into three groups:

Empowerment as Submitting Authority: Scott and Jaffe [2] defined empowerment as different ways of working together in which individuals feel that they are not only responsible for performing their assignment,
but also to make entire organization better. Work teams are also continuously acting together to improve organizational performance and to obtain high levels of productivity.

**Empowerment as to Make Motivation:** other authors define empowerment on the basis of personal beliefs and attitudes toward their function into the organization. Conger and Kanungo [3] identify empowerment as the process of increasing self-efficiency among individuals through realizing and eliminating conditions that lead to employee disability.

**Psychological Empowerment:** Thomas and Welthouse [4] introduced psychological empowerment a multi-dimension construct and defined it as a process of increasing intrinsic motives. They supplemented the model of Conger and Kanungo [3] and perceived the concept more than an antecedent of motivation and offered a comprehensive definition of empowerment.

An organization will improve if its human source level pursues to survive in complicated as well as dynamic world. Thus, fast changes, technological developments and obvious / latent competitions pose more and more importance of empowerment. During the empowerment process, management contributes employees to generate abilities necessary to independent decision making. This process not only is impressive at individual performance, but also inside their personality genesis. Internal and external pressures to organizations also aggregate the necessity of empowerment, too. Management and organization theoreticians have offered that the human resource empowerment culture deal with present era concerns and challenges. Empowered human resource and subsequent organization empowerment will provide and guarantee the organization against new terms of evolution. With empowerment culture, everyone will have competence in decision making and self-relied management regardless of being in any organizational dignity. The workers attitudes and behaviors will change in the light of empowerment and this change in attitudes may lead to increased job satisfaction and more participation. Certainly, employees’ job satisfaction and their involvement in decision making lead to perceive the organization as a part of their life and as a result generate job conscience and commitment toward their organization.

**Organizational Commitment:** Research on organizational commitment dates back to the 1960s. The early conceptualizations of the construct were unidimensional and commitment was defined as a consistent line of activity due to recognition of costs associated with quitting or more popularly, as an emotional attachment to the organization [5]. Organizational commitment was identified as a multi-dimensional construct that has been found to influence several positive job outcomes including reduced absence and turnover, self-reported citizenship, work effort and job performance. Organizational Commitment also was defined as workers' attitude which links individual identity to organization [6]. Most of the current approaches concerning organizational commitment consider this concept as a psychological bond to the organization. Based on this thought, a person who is intensely committed, take his/ her identity from organization identity and enjoy his/ her membership [7]. Bergman et al. [8] have defined organizational commitment as "crucial individual belief in accepting organizational goals and intending to stay in the organization". Undoubtedly, organizational identity is in direct relationship with organizational commitment in which members would have high commitment organizational values while they see their identity tied to organizational identity. Commitment in the workplace could be observed in different kinds: commitment to goals, job, organization, union, leader or team and commitment to personal career. The way of generating commitment is different as well as the way of its effect on organizational productivity [9].

Meyer and Allen [10] proposed a three-component model, which distinguishes affective, continuous and normative commitment. An employee will stay with an organization because he or she wants to, has to, or feels compelled to do so [11, 12, 13]. According to organization theory, organizational commitment is considered as important variable to indicate organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Due to positive linkage between organizational commitment and willing to undertake the extra-role behavior in the workplace, it is expected that organizational commitment would have a significant effect on OCBs [14]. Kim [15] found significant relationship between affective commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Organizational commitment accompanied with job satisfaction, will improve OCBs and contribute to organizational productivity [16].

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior:** For more than 70 years, a large number of studies showed interest in organizational kinds of employee behaviors [17, 18]. Barnard [19] defines effective organizations as "systems where individuals cooperate in order to achieve organizational objectives". The organizational behaviors have been expressed under various titles such as a tendency to cooperation, organizational loyalty and
commitment, extra role behaviors and social behaviors. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), in this sense, has been appropriated in most studies. OCB comprises of workers behavior which has a positive effect on organizational performance, but they are not recognized by employment contract. Although so much enthusiasm has been echoed upon such behavior during long year, however, there are some debates on context, antecedents and possible effects of OCB. The base axis of researches on OCB circulates around these behaviors as individual characteristics and they seek to explain that why some employees show more citizenship than others [20]. Organizational citizenship consists of discretionary and voluntary behaviors which promote organizational effectiveness, however, not directly or explicitly are recognized by the formal reward system [21]. OCBs in Organ’s view are such behaviors which a worker exhibits them as a good soldier. Good citizens as Bollino and Turnly [22] define, including extra-role behaviors, voluntary cooperation, following the rules while nobody care, help to elevate outside image of organization, obtaining positive attitude toward the organization and tolerating unpleasant working conditions [23]. There are different kinds of classification suggested by authors and this variety revealed some problems in agreed dimensions [24]. Organ, Podsakoff and McKenzie [25] offered a category of OCBs which includes:

**Helping Behaviors:** Altruism at the workplace; voluntary actions aimed at helping others employees, supporting or encouraging other persons; efforts to avoid interpersonal conflicts; promotion of cooperation among employees; helping others in case of absence or work overload; technical support to coworkers or clients; etc.

**Sportsmanship:** Tolerance of organizational difficulties, inconveniences and co-worker behaviors; accepting work-related problems without complaining excessively; positive attitude; etc.

**Organizational Loyalty:** Support for organizational objectives; defense of the corporate image to stakeholders; positive representation of the company to various communities; efforts to improve corporate reputation.

**Organizational Compliance:** Respect for explicit and implicit organizational rules; respect for deadlines, punctuality; adherence to the values of the organization; etc.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of relationship between Empowerment, OCB and Organizational Commitment.

**Individual Initiative:** Internal involvement; sharing ideas and opinions; making constructive suggestions; sharing information and knowledge to improve practices; open questioning of the status quo and inefficient management habits; etc.

**Self-Development:** Voluntary behaviors to develop personal knowledge, skills and abilities that could contribute to organizational functioning [26].

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Based on previous studies and the proposed model below, three research hypotheses were formulated to fulfill the objectives of the study.

**Research Hypotheses:**

- There is a significantly positive relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment.
- There is a significantly positive relationship between Empowerment and OCB.
- There is significantly positive relationship between Organizational Commitment and OCB.

**Participants:** The sample of the present investigation consisted of 224 randomly selected public organizations' employees in Urmia, Iran.

**Instruments:** The empowerment questionnaire in this study was developed by Short and Rinehart [27] with 28 items measuring four dimensions in our study: participating in decision making, leadership style, job enrichment and training. The reliability of which was estimated to be 0.892. Organizational Commitment was measured by 18 items from Meyer and Allen [28] and Allen and Meyer [29] evaluating affective, normative and
continuance commitment. Also, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) questionnaire was developed by Nettmeyer et al. [30] and Podsakoff et al. [24], containing 17 items with 5 dimensions which are: Altruism, Courtesy, Conscientiousness, Sportsmanship and Civic virtue with a reported reliability of 0.927. All of the described scales were responded to on a five-point Likert type scale (1 = strong disagreement, 5 = strong agreement). Data analysis was carried out by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

**RESULTS**

The quantity of Pearson correlation between Empowerment and Organizational Commitment variables is given in Table 1 which illustrates Pearson correlation among Empowerment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors as well as correlation between Organizational Commitment and OCB. As it can be seen in Table 1, the Empowerment variable is significantly related to both Organizational Commitment and OCB in 99 percent confident. Considering the results, it could be concluded that in significant level of 99%, there is a positive relationship between Empowerment and both dependent variables of the study.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the results, all three hypothesis of the present research article prove to be acceptable in a significant level. The amount of correlation between empowerment and commitment \( r = 69.5, p<0.01 \) supports the relationship among these variables in significance level of 99 percent. Which corroborates the first hypothesis. Referring to Table 1, the positive relationship between empowerment with OCB by correlation equal 56.7 is as acceptable them as relationship between OCB and organizational commitment through the rate of 61.8 and p<0.01; therefore, the second and third hypotheses are corroborated.

According to the literature review of the author about employees’ empowerment, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors, many researchers and scientists were established that there is a positive relationship between these variables. The employee empowerment aims to improve job performance, organizational and professional commitment and to increase worker’s motivation through improving their progress and required development toward self-efflorescence. Findings are aligning with previous consequences as the mean of the present study is proximate to Wall and Rinehart’s findings [31] in high schools. Besides, the findings are similar to Wall and Rinehart [31], Bogler and Somech [32], Blasé and Blasé [33] and Wu and Short [34] supporting positive relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment. Dee, Henkin and Duemer [35] upheld this relationship and informed that empowerment provides cognitive context and required conditions and behavior to generate organizational commitment. Group working, however, has direct effects on commitment and as a result empowerment in this case could have an indirect effect on organizational commitment. In his investigation, Knoczak et al. [36] found that psychological commitment has moderate role in the linkage of leader style and organizational commitment. Moreover, Nyhan [37] in addition, suggests that empowerment leads to increased two-way trust among managers and their employees and organizational commitment is as a positive result of this trust.

Based on the results, there is a direct relationship between workers’ empowerment on their organizational citizenship behavior \( r=56.7; p<0.01 \). Such positive correlation has been supported by Duke and Gansander [38] as well as Taylor and Bogotch [39]. Somech and Bogler [40] stated that teacher’s empowerment in terms of participating in decision making, plays a moderate role in its relation with OCB. Organ and Ryan [41] and Paine and Organ [42] introduced organizational commitment as an antecedent of OCB. Based on their investigation, organizational commitment as a predictor of sportsmanship and altruism, as two dimensions of OCB. Also Foote et al. [43] found positive relationship between commitment to organization’s policy and OCB. Moreover, Meyer et al. [44] realized that affective and normative aspect of commitment has positive relationship with OCB, but, the continuance commitment is negatively related to OCB.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>OCB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean: 3.8929</td>
<td>Std. dev: .56388</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean: 3.5057</td>
<td>Std. dev: .57214</td>
<td>69.5**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean: 4.0273</td>
<td>Std. dev: .49857</td>
<td>56.7**</td>
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**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
REFERENCES

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