

Workplace Empowerment and Commitment: An Empirical Study

Preeti S. Rawat

Abstract—Relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment was empirically studied. Empowerment is granting power or enabling people to exercise power. Organizational commitment is understood as individual's identification with and involvement in the organization. The study was conducted on employees from the service industry. Results showed that psychological empowerment led to commitment at workplace.

Index Terms—Psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, continuance, normative, affective.

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are continuously upgrading their technology, processes, and systems to cope with competition and challenging environment. Empowerment of employees and generating organizational commitment among them is perceived as going a long way in differentiating one organization from the rest. The present paper attempts to explore the relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment. It was hypothesized that psychological empowerment would result in organization commitment among employees.

II. CONCEPTS OF EMPOWERMENT AND COMMITMENT

A. Psychological Empowerment

Empowerment is perceived as a solution to highly regulated workplaces where creativity was stifled and workers were alienated, showing discontent both individually and collectively. An empowered and committed workforce is widely claimed to be essential for the effective functioning of modern organizations [1]-[7]. Empowerment is taking on responsibility of work and related activities [8]. It is a motivational process of being enabled.

In the organization empowerment reflects an active work orientation in which an individual wishes and feels 'able' to shape his or her work role or context [9]. This feeling of empowerment has been proposed and found to facilitate commitment of workers in organization [10]-[11] and is termed as psychological empowerment [12]. It is defined as increased task motivation manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact [13].

Meaning reflects the degree to which an individual believes in and cares about work goals and purpose. Competence refers to the self-efficacy specific to work and is rooted in individual's belief in his or her knowledge and capability to perform task activities with skill and success. Self-determination represents the degree to which an individual feels causal responsibility to work related actions, in the sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions [14]. Impact is the experience of having an influence on strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work to make a difference [15]. Together these four concepts combine additively to give the construct of psychological empowerment. Empowered employees are assumed to feel increased intrinsic work motivation and have a proactive rather than a passive orientation to their work roles. Authors have proposed [16] that psychological empowerment reflects the dynamic ebb and flow of people's perceptions and attitudes about their work environment (both local and broader organizational context) in relation to themselves. This perception will have an impact on the level of commitment of employees toward their work.

B. Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's identification with and involvement in the organization, characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, and a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization [17]. Scholars [18] have proposed three components of commitment: continuance, normative and affective.

Continuance commitment implies awareness to the costs incurred when leaving an organization, and those with this primary link stay because they have to. It is described as the willingness to remain in an organization because of personal investment in the form of non-transferable investments such as close working relationships with co-workers, retirement investments and career.

Normative commitment implies a feeling of obligation to stay with the organization, resulting in one's feeling he or she ought to stay. It results from what has been characterized as "generalized value of loyalty and duty" [19]. The individual believing in normative commitment demonstrates commitment behavior solely because she or he believes it is the moral and right thing to do. Authors [20] have identified personal norms as the factor responsible for what is referred to as an internalized normative pressure, that makes organizational commitment a moral obligation because the individual feels he or she ought to do so. This feeling of moral obligation is measured by the extent to which a person feels that he or she should be loyal to his or her organization, make personal sacrifice to help it out and not criticize it [21].

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Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. It results from and is induced by an individual and organizational value congruency. As a result, it becomes almost natural for the individual to become emotionally attached to and enjoy continuing membership in the organization [22] - [26]. In one of the study it has been [27] identified that factors which help create intrinsically rewarding situations for employees are the antecedents of affective commitment.

Employees with a strong affective commitment remain with an organization because they want to, those with a strong continuance commitment remain because they have to, and those with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to [28].

C. Empirical Studies Linking Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

Feeling of empowerment is proposed and found to facilitate commitment of workers to the organization [29]. These studies show that psychological empowerment evokes organizational commitment because of the following conditions:

A *meaningful* job provides a suitable fit between the requirements and purposes of one's organizational work roles and one's personal value system. A sense of *competence* gives workers the belief that they are able to perform their work roles with skill and success, stimulating them to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization. *Self-determination* gives workers control over their work and a voice in work-related decision processes, leading to enhanced involvement in the organization. *Having impact* facilitates workers' possibilities to participate in shaping the organizational system in which they are embedded.

According to job characteristics theory [30], if the work is intrinsically motivating, employees experience three critical psychological states; meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results. Research has shown that these three psychological states are conducive to higher levels of work motivation and organizational commitment [31]-[32]. As affective commitment is closely linked to intrinsic motivation [33] it is expected that psychological empowerment factors like meaning and self determination can commit people affectively. Normative commitment may be related to psychological empowerment as organization will reward self-determined employees and thereby stimulating the emergence of a psychological contract and encourage behavior based on mutuality. Continuance commitment is negatively linked to psychological empowerment because if people feel that that are incompetent or ineffective they will cling to the organization and attempt to leverage on non transferable investments like relationship with co-workers, retirement investment and career. An employee who is psychologically empowered would perceive that alternatives are available and employability outside the current the organization is possible. Therefore continuance commitment would reduce with the increase in psychological empowerment.

Team empowerment also leads to higher levels of

commitment in the organization [34]. Likewise number of other studies also showed that organizational commitment bears a strong relationship to employee empowerment [35] – [43]. Another study [44] showed that organizations that are able to attract and retain employees despite challenging economic conditions had employees involved in decision-making process especially those which affected them. They had more autonomy and control over their jobs and enjoyed better relationships with superiors. This was described as structural empowerment. A related study [45] showed positive relationships between employees' organizational commitment and top management actions such as allowing employee influence in decision making and supporting employee efforts, which are consistent with the components of empowerment. Based on the above discussion it is hypothesized that:

1a Psychological empowerment influences continuance commitment

1b Psychological empowerment influences normative commitment

1c Psychological empowerment influences affective commitment

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Sample

Sample consisted of 133 working professionals from the Service Industry covering Information Technology (IT); Information Technology enabled services (ITes) and Financial Services (Banks and Insurance). The sample consisted of 102 male and 31 female respondents. Their work experience was as follows: 88 respondents had up to 5 years of experience, 22 had between 6 to 10 years of experience, 6 had between 11 to 15 years of experience, 10 had between 16 to 20 years of experience, 2 had between 21 to 25 years and 3 had between 26 to 30 years of experience. The respondents were either graduates or post graduates.

B. Instruments Used

Psychological empowerment was measured by instrument developed by Spreitzer (1995). Organization Commitment was measured by instrument developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993).

IV. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing the results. Since the study was carried out in Indian organizations, both the instruments were subject to factor analysis (principal component analysis using the varimax rotation) and reliability analysis to establish their reliability in the Indian conditions. TABLE I shows the eigen value, variance and reliability (Cronbach alpha) of psychological empowerment and its sub dimensions. TABLE II shows the eigen value, variance and reliability (Cronbach alpha) of organization commitment and its sub dimensions. TABLE III shows minimum maximum scores, mean, standard deviation and correlation of psychological empowerment and organization commitment and the sub dimensions. The mean value for psychological empowerment

scale was 2.96 and for organization commitment 4.24. A low standard deviation in both the scales signified less dispersion. This meant that responses were consistent across employees. Table 3 also shows correlation between the two scales and the sub dimensions along with the significance levels. While most of the correlations were statistically significant some were not. Psychological empowerment and its sub dimensions significantly correlated with each other. Its correlation with the sub dimension of meaning was 0.64 ($p \leq 0.01$), impact 0.72 ($p \leq 0.01$), competence 0.46 ($p \leq 0.01$), self determination 0.67 ($p \leq 0.01$). Psychological empowerment also significantly correlated with organization commitment ($r = 0.20$, $p \leq 0.05$) and negatively with continuance commitment ($r = -0.19$, $p \leq 0.05$). The meaning dimension of psychological empowerment positively correlated with impact ($r = 0.33$, $p \leq 0.01$), organization commitment ($r = 0.26$, $p \leq 0.01$), normative commitment ($r = 0.18$, $p \leq 0.05$), and negatively with continuance commitment ($r = -0.20$, $p \leq 0.05$). The impact dimension positively correlated with self determination ($r = 0.28$, $p \leq 0.01$) and negative insignificant correlation with continuance commitment. Competence dimension positively correlated with self determination ($r = 0.26$, $p \leq 0.01$), normative commitment ($r = 0.30$, $p \leq 0.05$) and negative insignificant relation with continuance commitment. Self determination positively correlated with affective commitment ($r = 0.13$, $p \leq 0.05$) and negatively with continuance commitment ($r = 0.33$, $p \leq 0.05$). Organization commitment significantly with its entire three dimensions; normative ($r = 0.87$, $p \leq 0.01$); affective ($r = 0.40$, $p \leq 0.05$) and continuance ($r = 0.33$, $p \leq 0.05$).

The regression analysis with psychological empowerment and its sub dimensions as predictor variables and dimensions of organization commitment as criterion variables (TABLE IV) showed that psychological empowerment explained 3% of continuance commitment ($R^2=0.03$, $F = 4.491$, $p \leq 0.05$), 9% of affective commitment ($R^2= 0.09$, $F = 0.297$, $p \leq 0.05$) and 2% of normative commitment ($R^2= 0.02$, $F = 0.562$, $p \leq 0.05$) commitment. When sub dimensions of psychological empowerment were taken as predictor variables then continuance commitment was explained by competence ($\beta = 2.12$, $t = -0.27$, $p \leq 0.05$), and self determination ($\beta = -0.31$,

$t=-3.47$, $p \leq 0.001$). Affective commitment was explained by meaningfulness ($\beta=0.10$, $t=1.01$, $p \leq 0.05$) and self determination ($\beta=0.10$, $t=1.02$, $p \leq 0.05$). Normative commitment is explained by meaningfulness ($\beta=0.14$, $t=1.53$, $p \leq 0.05$). All the four sub dimensions together explain 10% of continuance commitment ($R^2 = 0.10$, $F=3.54$, $p \leq 0.001$) and 13% of affective commitment ($R^2=0.13$, $F=0.568$, $p \leq 0.05$).

TABLE I: EIGEN VALUE, VARIANCE AND RELIABILITY (CRONBACH ALPHA) FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT (PE) SCALE AND ITS SUB DIMENSIONS

PE scale	Factors			
	self determination	Impact	Meaning	competence
Eigen Value	3.39	2.05	1.69	1.20
percentage of variance explained	28.24	17.10	14.11	9.97
cumulative percentage of variance explained	28.24	45.35	59.45	69.42
Cronbach Alpha (0.76)	0.81	0.82	0.77	0.64

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis,
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

TABLE II: EIGEN VALUE, VARIANCE AND RELIABILITY (CRONBACH ALPHA) FOR ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT (OC) SCALE AND ITS SUB DIMENSIONS

	Factors		
	Normative	Affective	Continuance
Eigen Value	4.72	3.04	1.69
percentage of variance explained	26.21	16.90	9.39
cumulative percentage of variance explained	26.21	43.11	52.51
Cronbach Alpha (0.68)	0.66	0.65	0.76

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. ,
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a Rotation converged in 6 iteration

TABLE III: MINIMUM- MAXIMUM SCORES, MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND CORRELATION PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT AND SUB DIMENSIONS

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	PE_Tot_Mean	PE_Meaning	PE_Impact	PE_Compotence	PE_selfdetermination	OC_Tot_Mean	OC_Normative	OC_Affective	OC_Continuance
PE_Tot_Mean	1.8	4	2.96	0.42	1								
PE_Meaning	1	4	3.17	0.67	0.64**	1							
PE_Impact	1	4	2.32	0.76	0.72**	0.33**	1						
PE_Compotence	2	4	3.41	0.47	0.46**	0.15	0.04	1					
PE_selfdetermination	1	4	2.92	0.71	0.67**	0.12	0.28* *	0.26**	1				
OC_Tot_Mean	2.1	6.6	4.24	0.71	0.20*	0.26**	0.11	0.08	0.07	1			
OC_Normative	1.1	7	4.29	1.12	0.13	0.18*	0.04	0.30*	0.05	0.87**	1		
OC_Affective	1.25	7	4.42	1.23	0.09	0.18*	0.04	0.00	0.13*	0.40*	-0.03	1	
OC_Continuance	2.2	6	4.01	0.72	-0.19*	-0.20*	-0.09	-0.03	-0.180*	0.33*	0.07	0.03	1

N=133, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$

TABLE IV: REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT (PE) AND ITS SUB DIMENSIONS AS PREDICTOR VARIABLES AND DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT AS CRITERION VARIABLES (CV).

CV	Sub dimensions of empowerment as Predictor Variables									
OC continuance	PE (Predictor Variable)		Meaning		Competence		self determination		Impact	
	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values
	-0.18	2.12*	0.04	0.41	2.12	-0.27*	-0.31	-3.47***	0.04	0.41
	$R^2=0.03$		$R^2=0.10$							
	$F=4.491^*$		$F=3.54^{***}$							
OC Affective	PE (Predictor Variable)		Meaning		Competence		self determination		Impact	
	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values
	0.27	0.09*	0.10	1.01*	-0.04	-0.46	0.10	1.02*	-0.01	-0.13
	$R^2=0.09$		$R^2=0.13$							
	$F=0.297^*$		$F=0.568^*$							
OC Normative	PE (Predictor Variable)		Meaning		Competence		self determination		Impact	
	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values	beta	t-values
	0.12	1.41*	0.14	1.53*	0.01	0.11	0.04	0.39	-0.01	-0.11
	$R^2=0.02$		$R^2=.023$							
	$F=0.562^*$		$F=.747$							

$N=133$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the present study effect of psychological empowerment on commitment level of employees was studied. The study showed that psychological empowerment significantly influenced all three forms of commitment. While the relationship between psychological empowerment and affective and normative commitment is positive, continuance commitment showed inverse relationship (TABLE III and IV). The analysis of the impact of sub dimensions of empowerment on commitment dimensions also showed that all factors together negatively influenced continuance and positively influenced affective commitment. The reason for this relationship is explained subsequently.

Affective commitment is close to intrinsic motivation [46]. It is expected that psychological empowerment factors like meaning and self determination can commit people affectively. When goals are perceived as attainable, an attachment to a mission can emerge [47]. This leads to affective commitment.

Normative commitment may be related to psychological empowerment as organization will reward self-determined employees and thereby stimulating the emergence of a psychological contract and invite the behavior based on mutuality. The perception that an employee has something important to offer and is capable to contribute may strengthen the perceived psychological contract [48].

Continuance commitment on the other hand is inversely related to empowerment because if people perceive themselves as ineffective, they may cling to the organization because loss of job creates stress and problems. Higher psychological empowerment on the other hand, will lead to

the perception that alternatives will be available and employability outside the current the organization is an option. Consequently higher psychological empowerment results in lower continuance commitment. This explains for the inverse relationship.

Empowerment also gives power of decision making to employees making employees own their work and thus increase commitment. It has been shown in a study that dimensions of psychological empowerment contributed to employee commitment [49]. The relationship between sub dimensions of psychological empowerment and types of commitment is explained below.

Meaningful job provides a suitable fit between the requirements and purposes of one's organizational work roles and one's personal value system. This leads to creation of attachment with the work. Consequently meaningfulness showed significant relationship with affective and normative commitment. Competence was negatively linked to continuance commitment. A sense of competence gives workers the belief that they are able to perform their work roles with skill and success, leading to perception of various options apart from the current organization and thus lowering continuance commitment. Self determination was significantly related to affective and continuance commitment. Self-determination gives workers control over their work and a voice in work-related decision processes, leading to enhanced involvement in the organization. The impact dimension did not significantly explain any commitment. The present study proves all the three hypotheses. Psychological empowerment influences all the three types of commitment. While the relationship between psychological empowerment with affective and normative commitment is positive, the relationship with continuance commitment is inverse. Further studies are required to study

what factors moderate the relationship between empowerment and commitment.

The study is useful in handling employee engagement initiatives, loyalty at work and attrition issues.

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