The effect of empowerment
on teachers' organizational commitment

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to determine the effect of staff empowerment on teachers' three dimensioned organizational commitment. "Three Dimensioned Organizational Commitment Scale" and "School Personnel Empowerment Scale" were administered to 151 teachers who were randomly selected from primary schools in Gaziantep. Simple regression analyses results show that the total score of personnel empowerment significantly predict both the total score of organizational commitment and each dimensions of organizational commitment. According to the stepwise regression analyses results, "professional growth" and "impact" dimensions of personnel empowerment significantly predict both the total score of organizational commitment and the dimensions of "affective and normative commitment". Also, "status" and "decision making" dimensions of personnel empowerment significantly predict the "continuance commitment" dimension. The findings show the importance of personnel empowerment strategies on teachers' organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

As a management concept, empowerment can be described as increasing people's rights to decide and the process of educating people through solidarity, sharing, training and team work [1]. Not seeing employees as passive beings or objects, esteeming and recognizing them in various issues and minimizing the power gap between the employers are gaining more importance [2]. Today while experts' roles in organizations are gaining importance day by day, the source of power is shifted towards the people who are in lower positions from the people who held the power as a result of the position they traditionally have [3].

The concept of staff empowerment is one of the most controversial management concepts especially since the 1990s. For many organizations, empowerment is seen as a key to increase

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employees' potentiality, efficiency and quality [4]. Staff empowerment, in the sense of purpose and outcome is used in the meaning of "feeling yourself strong, believing in yourself and being skillful, but as a process according to personal and specialization area it is used in the meaning of changing structural and personal conditions for people to gain power and empowerment" [5].

1. 1. Approaches related to the concept of staff empowerment

It is seen that the concept of staff empowerment is basically dealt in "behavioral and cognitive dimensions" [6]. Behavioral dimension especially focuses on what organizations' top management should do at the empowerment phase and it tries to explain how an appropriate environment can be built up, but the cognitive dimension includes the analysis of how employees perceive the available environment and focuses on how these perceptions can be developed.

The elements of behavioral approaches in empowerment:

Authorization: Authorization is the process of encouraging the teachers take responsibility for their own personal growth and to have the competence to solve their problems [7]. A teacher has the responsibility to manage his own teaching program and to take part in making decisions about school budget, hiring teachers and other areas [8]. The expressions of using power are organizing activities and controlling them to reach the organizational goals of the management, to affect behaviors by bringing organization's resources together, the power of making decisions, management's right to make decisions and the right to request obedience, a communication flow, reaching the goal by making employees to work, institutional legislative power which enables the activities to be performed [9-13]. Empowerment is a concept used frequently in recent years. The basis of empowerment is the superior's not gathering the responsibilities which should be fulfilled by the subordinate [14]. The authority transfer is difficult if some simple rules are applied [15]. Teacher empowerment practices both in school and classroom levels have serious positive effects on the quality of education, students' academic achievements and teachers' organizational commitment levels [16]. To treat people with dignity and respect is the cornerstone of empowerment [17].

Resources: Availability to resources, as a component of empowerment, increases teachers' commitment to the work environment [18]. Like lifelong learners, to improve their professional development, teachers have to seek solutions for the educational problems and reach the resources to do search [19].

Information: Information means enabling employees to access information about organizations' changing internal and external environment (the organization's mission and vision, strategies that are followed etc.) [20]. As Enriquez, McBride and Paxton (2001) found, informing employees about strategic goals of the organization, strengthens their organizational commitment [21]. Empowered staff's motivation is higher and they are more inclined to perform their job roles [22].

1. 2. Cognitive approach elements of staff empowerment

Four cognitive empowerment elements (meaning, self-efficacy, freewill and impact) do not have any function when considered separately, but when taken as a whole, they constitute an element of power.

Meaning: Meaning is employees' drawing a conclusion by comparing personal values and standards with the goals and objectives related to work. Meaning is the degree of one's believing and paying attention to his/her own work goals and objectives [22].This result is the job's value for an individual. When the goals and objectives related to the work and member's personal values and standards come closer to each other, the importance of the work for the individual will increase [6]. If this emotion is at a low level, it causes feelings of discrimination and indifference. If it is at a high level, it results in accountability and participation [5].

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy means teachers' self-confidence about their knowledge and practice. It also expresses teachers' perceptions about their qualification to develop a training program for students and their necessary skills to find alternative solutions to the problems when they confront them [23,24]. Self-efficacy is examined in two dimensions as personal and general competence. Personal self-efficacy is a teacher's confidence in his/her knowledge and skills. General self-efficacy explains the perception about external elements that affect teaching [25]. When individuals are confident of the skills they have, they can deal easily with activities that require these skills. However, if they are not confident of their skills, they avoid these kind of activities as much as possible [5,6]. If a person fulfills his or her tasks successfully, his task will affect his personal abilities in a positive way [26]. Teachers whose general and personal self-efficacy are high have high expectations about their own effectiveness and competence, perform more extra-role behaviors, and have higher commitment levels to the school and to the teaching profession [7].

Freewill: Freewill means the power of the individual to decide independently whether to do something. In other words, freewill is teachers' looking for freedom in research, speech, and criticism, or teachers' freedom to act freely about procedures and instructions they are going to follow [6,27]. If a person decides on his own while performing his duties and uses his right to prefer, freewill may take place [26].

Impact: Impact expresses teachers' belief that they can have an effect on school life and that they can change school life bagged on their own purpose [7]. Teachers' belief that they have impact on school life results in students' positive attitudes and achievements [28]. While teachers' impact on developing Ministry of Education programs and their own teaching activities increase, their commitment to school also increases [29]. Impact means an employee's influence level on strategic, management or operational outcomes of the work. If an employee believes that his or her work will make a difference and really feels that it is true, perception of impact will take place [6,26].

1. 3. Basic elements in staff empowerment

Pitts (2005) listed empowerment factors in individual and organizational levels as follows: Participation and decision-making authority, autonomy, innovation, the availability of information and sharing of knowledge, skills and responsibilities [30].

Participation and decision-making authority: Teachers should participate in decision making process especially in decisions that affect them directly. These decisions can be handled in two dimensions: technical decisions (decisions related to students and education) and managerial decisions (decisions related to activities organized by the school management policies). There is a linear relationship between participation in decision-making process and organizational commitment. Individuals are inclined to be more committed to the decisions they participate in and take all the responsibilities of this kind of decisions [31].

Autonomy: Autonomy means teachers' feeling that they have control on different areas of work life, education planning, textbook selection, curriculum and program development, etc. [7]. Taking part in management not only motivates the participants but also enables the organization to have realistic and economical decision-making opportunities by building a dialog and cooperation between employee and employer. In other words it provides an organization to have managerial effectiveness and efficiency [32,33].

Employees' participation in organizational decisions in managerial and technical areas that directly affect them increases their commitment and job satisfaction [7,34-37]. Teachers who have high autonomy feel that managers strongly rely on them. They fulfill their tasks with a high sense of responsibility and have a high level of organizational commitment [35].

Innovation: As being the basic element of growth and a risky process, innovation provides the capacity which provides value for human and material resources. When the relation between the practices of innovative human sources and commitment is examined, it is found that the level of commitment is higher among employees who think they are informed adequately [38]. Innovation means to perform a challenging attitude in a constructive manner if current a situation needs to change. People who are unable to adapt the situation, have to leave the management stage [39].

Having new and (the most) developed vehicles motivates employees and provides source of pride [33].

Responsibility: Responsibility is defined as individuals' fulfilling their tasks [11]. Managers should provide task variety for their employees, increase the productiveness, give more responsibilities to the employees, and appreciate employees' efforts [40,41].

Common goals: Managers should reveal the contribution of every member's work to common goals and they should make employees take the roles that are suitable for their skills and knowledge. Especially, empowered teams are directed to common goals in internal, horizontal and vertical orientations. In staff empowerment, employees are directed to the common goals. Empowered teams should be identified with the organizations' vision, mission, values and priorities as a whole.

Praise: In successful organizations, there should be a group climate in which individuals and their tasks are appreciated and every member is regarded as valuable [42]. This climate has the impact of facilitating the application and enhancing the staff. Every person wants to be realized and wants to be praised because of a good work he/she has done. The best way of motivating employees is introducing them to other people and facilitate their being noticed by others.

Competence and skills development: It expresses teachers' perceptions about supports of their school. The school helps them to develop their skills for their personal development [7,43]. Teachers who are not given personal development opportunities are unwilling to take initiatives, resist changing, feel themselves as imprisoned at school, have a big rate of absenteeism, work at school unwillingly and have a low level of organizational commitment [44].

An open communication environment: Open communication makes employees feel empowered personally, to dedicate to the organization and make them identify with the organization well. Open communication also provides employees to work with good performance because they have more information and understand better about the area in which they are going to work in which context they are going to work [45]. Organizations that have an open educational environment are eager to innovation, to cooperate at a high level, to trust individual members [46].

Giving feedback about the performance: Giving feedback on performance gives the manager the opportunity to praise the good work of employees and to rearrange the work going bad. Evaluating can be understood as identifying superior properties and allows the staff to be more effective in the future [47,48]. As said by Ken Blanchard (the writer of ''One Minute Manager'') ''Feedback is the breakfast of champions''. Feedback provides a way to assess performance [33]. Feedback given by managers to their employees about their work affects positively employees' organizational commitment levels [35].

Flexibility in the work place: Work flexibility can be described as the capability of not doing the task in the predetermined manner, but instead doing it by using different methods and having communication with others. An abundance of rules and the restriction of flexibility reduces greatly creativity and affect negatively the work force [45].

Accessibility to resources: Increasing the accessibility of resources for employees leads to increase in innovations in the organization and to staff empowerment [49].

Team work: Employees have to cooperate to provide the best products and service. In this context, if teams are used well, a power is perceived, which makes the organization diverge from the traditional management style and become better organized [50].

2. Materials and methods

A relational scanning model is used in this research. The teachers working at the primary and secondary schools in the Gaziantep city center comprised the population of the study. Data obtained from 151 teachers -who were selected randomly from this population and filled the survey- were analyzed. Two scales were used in the research. The first scale, developed and revised by Meyer and Allen (1997) and adapted to Turkish by Karakus (2005) is the "Three Dimensioned Organizational Commitment Scale", that consists of three subscales "affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment" [44]. The

namely "School Personnel Empowerment Scale" developed by Short and Rinehart (1994) was adapted to Turkish for the purpose of this research. The scale has six subscales: "decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact".

Simple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the total scores of personnel empowerment significantly predict the total scores of organizational commitment. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the dimensions of personnel empowerment that predict dimensions of the organizational commitment of the teachers. In these analyses, six personnel empowerment subscales were used as independent variables and each organizational commitment dimension was included, respectively, as the dependent variable in the analysis. These analyses were conducted by using a stepwise regression and, as a result of the analyses, among the dimensions of personnel empowerment, only the significant predictors were left. The ones that did not predict the dependent variable in the analysis were eliminated.

3. Findings

The analyses were used to examine whether personnel empowerment and its subscales predicted organizational commitment and its subscales significantly. Stepwise regression was used to eliminate insignificant personnel empowerment subscales. Only the significant predictors were included in the tables.

Table 1. Simple regression analysis results of teachers' organizational commitment on personnel empowerment

Model 1	*Dependent Variable; Organizational Commitment*					
Independent Variables	B	SE	β	T	p	r
Constant	2,017	0,305	-	6,620	0,000	-
Personnel Empowerment	0,478	0,081	0,436	5,919	0,000	0,436
R= 0,436	R^2= 0,190					
F= 35,039	p= 0,000					

*p<0.05, p<0.01, ***p<0.001

As shown in Table 1, as a result of the simple regression analysis, it was determined that personnel empowerment predict organizational commitment significantly and positively. (R=0.436, R^2model=0.190, p<0.001). This model explains 19% of the variance in organizational commitment. This finding indicates that teachers who are more empowered are more integrated with the teaching profession and to the school in which they work.

As shown in Table 2, results of the stepwise regression analysis indicated that the total score of organizational commitment was predicted significantly and positively by professional growth and impact dimensions of personnel empowerment (R=0.543, R^2model=0.295, p<0.001). The model composed of these two subscales explains 29,5% of the organizational commitment variance. The relative order of the importance of the dimensions that significantly predict organizational commitment level is: 1. Professional growth (β=.365, p<0.001) and 2. Impact (β=0.286, p<.001). This finding implies that the teachers who have had the chance to improve themselves in their field and whose level of influence has been increased are more committed to their schools and professions.

Table 2. Stepwise regression analysis results of teachers' organizational commitment on dimensions of personnel empowerment

Model 2	Dependent Variable; Organizational Commitment						
Independent Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	Zero Order r	Partial r
Constant	1,574	0,287	-	5,494	0,000***	-	-
Professional Growth	0,340	0,070	0,365	4,882	0,000***	0,474	0,372
Impact	0,247	0,065	0,286	3,827	0,000***	0,426	0,300
R= .543 R^2= .295							
F= 30,924 p= .000***							

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

As is shown in Table 3, as a result of the stepwise regression analysis, it is determined that professional growth and its impact dimensions of personnel empowerment predicts affective commitment level significantly and positively (R=0.533, R^2model=0.284, p<0.001). This model, composed of these two subscales explains 28,4% of the variance in affective commitment. The relative order of the importance of the dimensions that are significant predictors of affective commitment level is: 1. Professional growth (β=0.353, p<0.001) and 2. Impact (β=0.286, p<0.001). This finding indicates that teachers who are provided with the opportunities of professional development and whose level of influence is increased are more emotionally committed to the teaching profession and to the school in which they work.

Table 3. Stepwise regression analysis results of teachers' affective commitment on dimensions of personnel empowerment

Model 3	Dependent Variable; Affective Commitment						
Independent Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	Zero Order r	Partial r
Constant	1,275	0,376	-	3,390	0,001***	-	-
Professional Growth	0,429	0,091	0,353	4,685	0,000***	0,463	0,360
Impact	0,322	0,085	0,286	3,802	0,000***	0,422	0,298
R= .533 R^2= .284							
F= 29,394 p= .000***							

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

As is shown in Table 4, as a result of the stepwise regression analysis, it is determined that

Table 4. Stepwise regression analysis results of teachers' continuance commitment on dimensions of personnel empowerment

Model 4	Dependent Variable; Continuance Commitment						
Independent Variables	B	SE	β	t	P	Zero Order r	Partial r
Constant	1,597	0,329	-	4,856	0,000***	-	-
Decision making	0,223	0,077	0,239	2,883	0,005**	0,307	0,231
Status	0,187	0,084	0,184	2,218	0,028*	0,272	0,179
R= .351 R^2= .123							
F= 10,394 p= .000***							

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

decision making and status dimensions of personnel empowerment predict continuance commitment level significantly and positively (R=.351, R^2_{model}=0.123, p<0.001). This model composed of these two subscales explains 12,3% of the variance in continuance commitment. The relative order of the importance of these dimensions which are significant predictors of continuance commitment level is: 1. Decision making (β=0.239, p<0.001) and 2. Status (β=0.184, p<0.001). Participation to the decision making process and empowering teachers' professional status ensure them to be more committed to the school in which they work.

As is shown in Table 5, as a result of the stepwise regression analysis, it is determined that professional growth and its impact dimensions of personnel empowerment predicts normative commitment level significantly and positively (R=0.543, R^2_{model}=0.295, p<0.001). This model

Table 5. Stepwise regression analysis results of teachers' normative commitment on dimensions of personnel empowerment

Model 5	Dependent Variable; Normative Commitment						
Independent Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	Zero Order r	Partial r
Constant	1,849	0,354	-	5,222	0,000***	-	-
Professional Growth	0,422	0,086	0,381	4,901	0,000***	0,455	0,374
Impact	0,199	0,080	0,193	2,490	0,014*	0,339	0,201
R= .543 R^2= .295							
F= 30,924 p= .000***							

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

composed of these two subscales explains 29,5% of the variance in normative commitment. The relative order of the importance of these dimensions which are significant predictors of normative commitment level is: 1. Professional growth (β=0.381, p<0.001) and 2. Impact (β=0.193, p<0.001). Providing opportunities of professional development and increasing their level of influence ensure teachers to be more committed to the schools for which they are working and to their professions affectively and normatively.

4. Results and discussion

The results of this study show that teachers' empowerment by the school management plays an important role in the realization of organizational commitment. Personnel empowerment predicts both the general points and the subscales of the teachers' organizational commitment levels significantly. Similarly, it was determined by Demirer et al. (2008), Wu and Short (1996) and Borghei et al. (2010) that personnel empowerment has a positive effect on organizational commitment [51-53].

"Professional growth" and "impact" dimensions of personnel empowerment significantly predicted both the total score of organizational commitment and the dimensions of affective and normative commitment. The teachers that are provided with professional growth opportunities and feel they have an effect on the school issues become more committed to their profession and to the school where they work. In similar research, it was determined that the impact dimension of the personnel empowerment increases affective commitment [54] and the that professional growth dimension has a positive effect on organizational commitment generally [7].

As Meyer Allen (1997) stated, a person is committed computationally to a profession or organization for the sake of the material benefits and status that are gained by the profession or organization, so the person develops "continuance commitment" in order not to lose the benefits gained [43]. Corroboratively, the findings of this study showed that "status" and "decision making" dimensions of personnel empowerment significantly predict "continuance commitment" dimension. Teachers' feeling that they gained a status at which they feel themselves valuable socially and feel respectable by participating in the decision making process at school cause them to develop continuance commitment to the teaching profession and to the school. In similar research, it was found that the "decision making" dimension of personnel empowerment increases "continuance commitment" [54], and the "status" dimension has a positive effect on general organizational commitment [7]. However, Liu et al. (2007) determined that there was no significant relation between empowerment and continuance commitment [55].

5. Conclusion

There are various research findings showing that personnel empowerment strategies positively affect employees' behaviors and attitudes towards the organization for which they work. Within the scope of personnel empowerment, employees want to participate in decision making process, to improve them professionally, to have respectable status, to be autonomous at work, to feel self-efficacy at work, and to have an impact on work [56].

The findings of this research show that staff empowerment enables teachers to be more committed to their school and to their profession. When teachers have been empowered by their school managers and provided with professional growth opportunities, they become affectively and normatively committed to the school in which they work and to their profession. The teachers who feel themselves reputable having participated in the decision making process and who feel they gained valuable status through the teaching profession develop continuance commitment.

It is known that the increase in employees' commitment levels enables teachers to better in-role and extra-role performance, to keep themselves away from counterproductive work behaviors, and to feel more satisfied with work. It would be beneficial for educational managers to apply personnel empowerment strategies to gain these positive results by increasing teachers' commitment to their profession and to the school in which they work.

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