PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT, JOB SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT AMONG MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to identify the influence of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among Malaysian secondary school teachers. About 800 trained teachers in 83 types of National Secondary Schools across the three States of Northern Peninsular Malaysia, namely Penang, Kedah and Perlis were chosen randomly taking part in this study. The data for this research was obtained through a set of questionnaire which was divided into three sections. The data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that teachers' job satisfaction and commitment is influenced mainly by psychological empowerment. The findings also found that the self-determination and impact dimension of psychological empowerment had a significant influence on intrinsic job and extrinsic job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the findings of the multiple regression analysis also demonstrate that psychological empowerment dimension of meaning and competence dimension were significantly influenced the affective and continuance commitment. The result of this study has some direct implications teachers' behaviors and attitudes in school organizations.

Keywords: Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, commitment.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, wide attention has been given to the study of the empowerment concept. According to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), empowerment includes organizational processes and structures that enhance employee participation and improve goal achievement for the organization. A number of researchers look at the concept of employee empowerment as an antecedent and predictor of favorable outcomes at the workplace. Reviewing the literature, many research studies can be found indicating that empowered employees will help their organizations achieve a competitive advantage (Forrester, 2000). Even though empowerment practices has been implemented since the early nineties in Malaysia, there has not been a considerable number of research studies investigating the impact that these empowerment practices can have in determining employee outcomes at work such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment simultaneously especially in the educational context. Therefore, the current study seeks to enrich our understanding by filling the gap in the literature in the field of educational management especially in the school organization setting. Thus, the focus of this study is to investigate the influence of psychological empowerment on organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment of employees has long been of great interest to many organizational researchers (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The main focus of recent research on psychological empowerment has been on studying the

psychological foundations of the construct in terms of employee autonomy and self-efficacy (Huang, Shi, Zhang, & Cheung, 2006) highlights intrinsic motivation rather than managerial practices.

Researchers like Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) approached employee empowerment in psychological terms and define psychological empowerment as "a practice of improving feelings of self-efficacy among organizational players through the identification and removal of conditions that foster powerlessness by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing access to efficacy information". Following this line of thinking, Avey, Hughes, Norman, and Luthans (2008) define psychological empowerment as a form of intrinsic motivation to perform tasks, demonstrated in the following four cognitions: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact.

Organizational Commitment

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) defined organizational commitment as ''the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization''. Organizational commitment has received great interest in the field of organizational behavior for a long time. Cuskelly and Boag (2001) stated that it is important to understand such attitudes because they significantly influence key aspects of the organization. Clayton and Hutchinson (2002) explained that the attitude of an individual towards the organization is demonstrated by their loyalty to the organization and identification with its values, while the behavioral aspect of commitment is manifested in an employee's readiness to make efforts in order to contribute to the organization, as well as their intention to stay in the organization.

Many definitions have been used to describe Organizational commitment in the literature, but most definitions stress that organizational commitment is an attitude that has an affective aspect and attachment to the organization. (Solinger, Van Olffen, & Roe, 2008). Similarly, other researchers like Allen and Meyer (1990) consider this concept as a psychological state that connect employees to their organizations. This definition of commitment as a psychological state emphasizes the affective perspective of organizational commitment and constitutes a major approach to the treatment of organizational commitment (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

Most definitions of organizational commitment view this construct in terms of the degree to which employees identify with and are involved with the organization.

Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction concept is widely investigated and measured in the organizational literature. According to Rivera and Tovar (2007), job satisfaction plays an important role when employees have to decide whether to stay in or leave an organization. The concept of job satisfaction is also of vital importance because it was found by Sanchez et al. (2004) that job satisfaction can affect the physical and mental well-being of organizational members.

Many conditions have been identified as antecedents to job satisfaction. Ladebo (2005) suggests that job satisfaction is facet-specific. For example, facets of satisfaction may include received pay, co-workers, supervision, opportunities for promotion and the work itself. Thus,

an individual employee could be satisfied with some aspects of the job, but not satisfied with some other facets.

Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

Employee empowerment can have significant consequences for both individuals and their organizations. When individuals are empowered, they tend to attach more importance and value to their work, their level of job satisfaction is likely to increase, their contribution to work productivity and success will be greater (Koberg, Boss, Senjem, & Goodman, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995b). Job satisfaction is one of the key outcomes of psychological empowerment. Bordin, Bartram, and Casimir (2007) found that psychological empowerment was positively correlated with job satisfaction.

Moreover, Carless (2004) concluded that among the four facets of empowerment, meaning and competence were more significant in predicting job satisfaction. According to Bowen and Lawler (1995), psychological empowerment would result in more satisfied employees. Besides, Gazzoli, Hancer, and Park (2010) found that psychological empowerment had a positive impact on job satisfaction for employees working in an American restaurant. In line with this, in a study conducted by Avey et al. (2008) on a sample of 341 working adults, psychological empowerment emerged as a potential and important predictor of employee job satisfaction and intentions to leave an organization. In a similar way, Seibert et al. (2004) concluded that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between empowerment climate and job satisfaction.

The findings of some research studies found that an individual's perception of empowerment is an important mediator between the organizational context and job satisfaction (Larrabee et al., 2003; Spreitzer, 1995b). A study by Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) concluded that increased job satisfaction is one of the main outcomes of the perceived feeling of psychological empowerment among the employees in the workplace. They also found that, although meaning and impact dimensions contributed to the overall feeling of job satisfaction, the most significant relationship was with self-determination dimension.

Bordin et al. (2007) found that all four dimensions of psychological empowerment have a major role in contributing to job satisfaction. With regard to the meaning dimension, Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe (2000) found that the meaning dimension of empowerment has the strongest argument for a positive relation to work satisfaction. Thus, the meaning element of empowerment is essential for job satisfaction because an individual can only derive satisfaction from their work when their work is meaningful to them. With regard to the impact dimension, Liden et al. (2000) contended that when employees have a feeling that the work they are doing can impact the outcomes within their organization, they will feel actively involved and therefore build a sense of job satisfaction.

Regarding the competence component of empowerment, Bordin et al. (2007) concluded that individuals who feel that they have the competency needed to do their assigned tasks and are more likely to feel more satisfied with their jobs. Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason (1997) found that all four dimensions of psychological empowerment are positively linked to satisfaction on the job, where the correlation was strongest for the dimension of meaningfulness. Moreover, research by Liden et al. (2000) established the relationship of the competence and meaningfulness dimensions with job satisfaction.

Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

Many studies investigating the relationship between these two variables can be found in the literature. For example, the findings of Liden et al. (2000) show that organizational commitment has been an important outcome of psychological empowerment. The results of a number of studies showed that there has been a relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment, claiming that when employees feel more empowered, they tend to have a greater sense of commitment to the organization (Koberg et al., 1999; Spreitzer, 1995b).

The results of some studies concluded that organizational commitment is a primary product of psychological empowerment. These studies concluded that the sense of perceived empowerment will lead to employees who are more committed to their work and their organization in general (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005; Menon, 2001). A study by Bordin et al. (2007) found that organizational commitment was positively correlated to psychological empowerment. Another study in the nursing field done by Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, and Casier (2000) found a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.

In a study conducted by Janssen (2004) on a sample of teachers from a secondary school in the Netherlands, it was found that there is a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment when there is no conflict between employees and supervisors. This study also found that psychological empowerment can be viewed as a way of encouraging an individual's commitment to the organization because it enhances the fit between work roles and employees' personal values and the confidence in an individual's capability to do work well, which in turn encourages employees to make more efforts on behalf of the organization and participate more in decision-making.

A study by Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) found that authentic leaders can encourage employees' commitment to the organization by enhancing their positive attitudes and nurturing a sense of psychological empowerment. Similarly, Kirkman and Rosen (1999) reported that organizational commitment has been one of the important organizational outcomes that has been positively linked to psychological team empowerment. Moreover, Bordin et al. (2007) concluded that when employees have high levels of perceived psychological empowerment, they tend to achieve higher levels of organizational commitment. Spreitzer (1995b) and Liden et al. (2000) reported similar findings indicating that employee psychological empowerment has been linked to affective organizational empowerment. According to Liden et al. (2000), all dimensions of psychological empowerment have been linked to organizational commitment but the meaning dimension commitment

Based on the descriptions above, specifically the study was carried out to identify the influence of psychological empowerment on job satisfaction and commitment among Malaysian secondary school teachers.

METHODOLOGY
Participants

The data for this study was collected from 800 trained teachers in 83 types of National Secondary Schools across the three States of Northern Peninsular Malaysia, namely Penang,

Kedah and Perlis using a random sampling. The pre-requisite for teacher participation as respondents in this study was that the teachers must have worked for at least a year under the incumbent principals. The sample consists of 68 percent female respondents, 32 percent male respondents, while an overall of 89 percent respondents with working experience of more than five years.

Measures

A set of questionnaires were employed in this study, combining five Likert scales measuring psychological empowerment, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected schools.

The Psychological Empowerment Scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) was used to measure psychological empowerment. It is a self-report instrument designed to measure the level of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. This scale consist of twelve (12) items; each three (3) items measure one of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.

Meanwhile, organizational commitment was measured using 15 item of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by (Mowday et al., 1982). The 9-item scale was used to measure affective commitment and the 6-item scale was used to measure continuance commitment. A 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was employed in this study. Respondents indicated their feelings about their organization by circling one of the five choices.

Lastly, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, and Lofquist (1966) was used to measure respondents' level of work satisfaction. This study utilized the short form consisting from 20 items which include two sub dimensions of job satisfactions which is intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. The MSQ is scored on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1= Very dissatisfied to 5= Very satisfied.

RESULTS
The Influence of Psychological Empowerment on Job Satisfaction

For the purpose of testing this influence, the regression analysis was used and the findings are as illustrated in Table 1 below. The findings from Table 1 show that all the dimensions of psychological empowerment explained 42 percent of the variance in the intrinsic aspect of job satisfaction, and 30 percent of the variance in the extrinsic aspect of job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the findings of the multiple regression analysis also point out that psychological empowerment dimension of meaning significantly influenced the intrinsic job satisfaction (β=.25, p=.01). Meanwhile, the self-determination and impact dimension of psychological empowerment had a significant influence on intrinsic job satisfaction (β=.28; p=.01; β=.22, p=.01), and extrinsic job satisfaction (β =.23; p=.01; β=.26, p=.01).

Table 1: Findings of the Standard (β) Beta Regression Value for Job Satisfaction

Predictor	Job Satisfaction	
	Intrinsic J.S	Extrinsic J.S
Meaning	.25**	.15
Competence	.07	.04
Self-Determination	.28**	.23**
Impact	.22**	.26**
R^2 Value	.43	.31
R^2 Adjusted Value	.42	.30
F Value	35.12**	20.91**

Note. *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$

The Influence of Psychological Empowerment on Organizational Commitment

For the purpose of testing this influence, the regression analysis was used and the findings are as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Findings of the Standard (β) Beta Regression Value for Organizational Commitment

Predictor	Organizational Commitment	
	Affective	Continuance
Meaning	.19**	.20**
Competence	.22**	.29**
Self-Determination	.22*	.02
Impact	.16	.26**
R^2 Value	.27	.36
R^2 Adjusted Value	.26	.35
F Value	17.26**	26.07**

Note. *$p<.05$, **$p<.01$

With respect to the influence of psychological empowerment on organizational commitment, the findings from Table 2 show that all the dimensions of psychological empowerment accounted for 26 and 36 percent of the variance in the affective and continuance organizational commitment. Meanwhile, the findings of the multiple regression analysis also demonstrate that psychological empowerment dimension of meaning ($\beta=.19$, $p=.01$; $\beta=.20$, $p=.01$) and competence dimension ($\beta=.22$, $p=.01$; $\beta=.29$; $p=.01$) were significantly influenced the affective and continuance commitment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the influence of psychological empowerment on teachers' job satisfaction, the findings showing that when work roles don't conflict with teachers' values and beliefs, they tend to experience general and intrinsic job satisfaction because the job itself generate an inner sense of motivation. Moreover, when teachers perceive themselves as self-determined in the workplace, this is shown to significantly contribute to all three aspects of job satisfaction which is consistent with the findings of Spreitzer (1997) and Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003). In addition, the findings also demonstrate that when teachers have impact over large strategic, administrative, and operating issues and policies, they tend to be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated and satisfied because they are granted responsibility over organizational issues and they are being involved in the way school policies are put into practice which is consistent with the findings of Niehoff, Enz, and Grover (1990) who found that the more employees are engaged in decision-making, the more satisfied they are likely to be with the job itself. In line with this, Liden et al. (2000) found similar finding supporting the findings of this study.

With regard to the influence of psychological empowerment on organizational commitment, shows that the meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment significantly influenced teachers' commitment to their jobs supporting the hypothesized relationship between psychological empowerment and organization commitment. These findings can be explained by the argument of Liden et al. (2000) who contended that empowerment might cause a sense of organizational commitment through a process of reciprocation. This is also supported by the findings of Joo and Shim (2010) who found psychological empowerment as a predictor of organizational commitment. This is a logical result because when employees view their work as meaningful to them and that their job helps them acquire the skills and competencies needed for the job and they feel that they can influence their work outcomes, they will be more attached to their organizations. These findings are consistent with the findings of Spreitzer (1995b) and Liden et al. (2000).

It can be concluded that psychological empowerment has a significant influence on how it affect teachers' behaviors and attitudes, namely organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the school environment.

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