ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT AND COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to identify the mediating role of the psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between organizational empowerment and 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 the meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment fully mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment (informal power) and affective organizational commitment. The result also indicates that there is a significant mediating influence of psychological empowerment in the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational 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 there has been considerable academic and practitioner interest in the topic of empowerment. Empowerment programs have been introduced in a number of organizations in order to improve productivity, increase customer satisfaction and enhance competitive advantage (Forrester, 2000). 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. Furthermore, a close look at the organizational literature on to the topic of empowerment, the majority of research studies on organizational empowerment and organizational behavior are mainly done in the context of western culture and the measurement scales were also constructed by the western scholars. However, Malaysia has a collective culture like any other part of Asia and South East Asian countries that is different from western cultures in terms of how empowerment is perceived and interpreted by people in general and within organizations in particular. Hence, there has been little research that has examined mediating role of psychological empowerment on the links between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment (Chang, Shih, & Lin, 2010). Yet an understanding of the Malaysian work context that facilitates empowerment has important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, such knowledge would extend our understanding of the antecedents of empowerment, in particular, the psychological appraisals of the work environment that are important determinants of empowerment. For the practitioner, it provides concrete suggestions about the work place that can be targeted to develop feelings of empowerment. The main purpose of this study was to test a model that

psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between organizational empowerment and commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Organizational and Psychological Empowerment

In the organizational literature, there are two widely discussed perspectives on employee empowerment; these two are the structural (organizational) approach and the psychological approach. The first approach is organizational empowerment which is about organizational policies, practices and structures that provide employees with greater freedom and discretion to make their own decisions and have more influence on their work (Mills & Ungson, 2003). The other perspective, according to Peccei and Rosenthal (2001), is psychological empowerment which takes a different view on empowerment and focuses on employees' perceptions and cognitions. According to Spreitzer (1995), employees are actually empowered when they have genuine perceptions of empowerment in their workplace. Psoinos and Smithson (2002) explain that the psychological view focuses on perceptions of power, competence, and self-efficacy. Accordingly, psychological empowerment is an important component of workplace empowerment because it constitutes intrinsic task motivation that is an important component of empowering work conditions.

Teacher Empowerment

Empowering teachers within their schools represents a great avenue for cultivating accomplished teachers providing them with the required autonomy and freedom that make it possible for them to work effectively for the benefit of all concerned. Teacher empowerment is viewed by Short, Greer, and Melvin (1994:28) as " a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems". According to Brunetti (2001), it is a common desire for almost all teachers to have a fair share of autonomy in the classroom and that their decision to stay in the teaching profession is largely determined by their perceived sense of autonomy. According to Boey (2010), when employees are empowered within their organizations, they are likely to have a sense of ownership over their work resulting in a greater sense of responsibility towards their duties and more job satisfaction. Empowerment in the workplace contributes to a win-win situation for the individual and the organization. Hence, due to the potential benefits of empowerment, there has been a growing research interest in empowerment in the educational setting.

According to Short and Greer (2002), in order to empower teachers in schools, teachers need to undergo a change process, both at the personal and institutional level, which will bring about transformations in the structure of their schools and their relationships with their colleagues. Thus, any change and reform efforts should focus on involving teachers in the implementation of these reforms and their participation should be encouraged so that effective outcomes of teacher empowerment can be realized.

Employee Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

Many studies on employee empowerment have concluded that empowerment can provide many benefits to organizations including enhanced organizational performance and greater well-being for employees (Wall, Wood, & Leach, 2004). Moreover, the findings of some studies highlighted the importance of structural empowerment in providing employees access to information, support, opportunity, and resources that make it easier for them to carry out

their work effectively (Leiter & Laschinger, 2006). In addition, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) argued that it is employees' personal perceptions of empowerment (psychological empowerment), not only empowering structures of the organization, that are also important in generating positive worker outcomes. Moreover, according to Liden, Wayne, and Sparrowe (2000),   when employees appreciate their work, this will enhance feelings of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) studied the mediating role of psychological empowerment in the relationship between transformational leadership and commitment concluding that empowering conditions have a positive influence on employees as they will respond by showing more organizational commitment.

Employee commitment to the organization can be of great benefit to employees themselves and their organizations as well. The findings of many studies pointed out that employee commitment to the job and the organization is another major outcome of psychologically empowered individuals (Bhatnagar, 2005; Laschinger & Finegan, 2005). In the field of education, in a study conducted on a sample of teachers from a secondary school in the Netherlands, Janssen (2004) found that psychological empowerment is a way of enhancing an individual's commitment to the organization since it enhances the match between employee's work roles and their personal value system; confidence in an individual's ability to carry out tasks effectively, which encourages workers to make more efforts for the benefit of the organization and to engage in decision- making. In another study surveying a sample of employees in a Singaporean subsidiary of a large American organization operating in the IT industry, Bordin, Bartram, and Casimir (2007) found that employees' levels of organizational commitment would be higher when they have a higher sense of psychological empowerment. Several other researchers also suggest that empowered employees have a higher level of organizational commitment, as empowered employees are likely to have high levels of focus in their jobs and more self-motivated (Avolio et al., 2004; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999). Therefore, it is obvious that organizational commitment is an important outcome of psychological empowerment at the workplace.

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. The Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ-II), Laschinger and Havens (1996) was used to measure organizational empowerment. It is 12-item a self-report on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Meanwhile 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. Lastly, organizational commitment was measured using 15 item of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by (Mowday et al., 1982). 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.

RESULTS
Descriptive

The descriptive analysis includes mean, standard deviation and the inter-correlation between research variables as tabulated in Table 1. Results from Table 1 revealed that that there was an evidence of relationships between each dimension of psychological empowerment except self determination and organizational commitment and the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment were both significant.

Table 1: Mean Score, Standard Deviation, and Correlation between Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Organizational Empowerment	3.64	1.23	-					
2.Meaning	3.88	1.28	.60**	-				
3. Competence	3.62	1.07	.54**	.67**	-			
4. Self Determination	3.69	1.16	.29	.37**	.57**	-		
5. Impact	3.04	1.18	.54**	.67**	.60**	.76**	-	
6. Commitment	3.85	1.28	.56*	.45**	.58**	.19	.69*	-

Note. **Sig at the level of $p<.01$

Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment

Three step recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) was deployed in analyzing the mediating role of psychological empowerment by using multiple regressions and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the regression analysis involving three steps: Step 1, with organizational empowerment (informal power) as the independent variable (predictor), and organizational commitment as the dependent variable; Step 2, with psychological empowerment (P.E) as the independent variable and organizational commitment as the dependent variable; and Step 3 , with organizational commitment as the dependent variable and both psychological empowerment (P.E) as the mediator and organizational empowerment (informal power) as the independent variable.

Table 2: Standardized β Value for Regression of Mediation Role of Psychological Empowerment

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Independent Variable			
Organizational Empowerment	.39**		.08
Mediating Variable			
Meaning		.19*	.17*
Competence		.28**	.27**
Impact		.25**	.22**
R² Adjusted Value	.15	.35	.35
F Value	33.54	34.90	26.46

Note. Sig at the level of *$p< .05$, **$p< .01$

The findings from Table 2 show that the *β* value for informal power was reduced from (*β*=.39; *p*=.01) in Step 1 to (*β*=.08; *p*=.01) in Step 3. Meanwhile, the *β* value for the meaning dimension of psychological dimension also decreased from (*β*=.19; *p*=.01) in Step 2 to (*β*=.17; *p*=.01) in Step 3. Meanwhile, the *β* value for the competence dimension of psychological empowerment also decreased from (*β*=.28; *p*=.01) in Step 2 to (*β*=.27; *p*=.01) in Step 3. Meanwhile, the *β* value for the impact dimension of psychological empowerment also decreased from (*β*= .25; *p*=.01) in Step 2 to (*β*= .22; *p*=.01) in Step 3.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the results show that the meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment fully mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment (informal power) and affective organizational commitment. As a conclusion, the results above indicate that there is a significant mediating influence of psychological empowerment in the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment fully mediated the relationship between organizational empowerment (informal power) and organizational commitment. These findings suggest that teachers' commitment to the organization is influence by how teachers psychologically perceive their school environment. Specifically, the meaning dimension that is how meaningful teachers view their work to be; the competence dimension that is to what extent teachers perceive their work as enhancing their skills and competencies; the impact dimension of psychological empowerment that is to what degree teachers view their jobs as allowing them to influence strategic, administrative and operating outcomes all mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment. This is congruent with the findings of Liden et al. (2000) who reported that reported that the meaning dimension mediates the relationship between job characteristics and organizational commitment.

The findings suggested that the meaning, competence, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment fully mediated the relationship between organizational empowerment (informal power) and organizational commitment. This can be understood in such a way that informal power that is creating useful and successful relationships and coalitions with supervisors, peers, and subordinates facilitates access to structures of power in the organization. In turn, this leads to teachers' organizational commitment by means of teachers' perceived psychological empowerment. These findings are inconsistent with the findings of Chang et al. (2010) who found that psychological empowerment did not mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest several implications for human resource practitioners. These results indicate that organizational empowerment of employees such as providing them with access to information about the vision of their organization and information about their assigned jobs and tasks can make their jobs meaningful to them which will ultimately lead to favorable organizational outcomes. Moreover, the findings also revealed that providing employees with access to resources would and freedom to utilize these resources would create a sense of competence on the part of those employees which will ultimately enhance

their satisfaction with their jobs and loyalty to their employing organization. The findings of this study also suggested that it is not only the visible work conditions at the workplace that lead to favorable work outcomes; it is also important for human resource practitioners to take into account their employees' perceptions and interpretations of these immediate work conditions since different employees tend to perceive their environment differently. Thus, human resource managers need to pay more attention to the way their subordinates interpret the organizational climate if they want to achieve competitive advantage for their organizations.

The results of the present study indicated that, overall, psychological empowerment fully mediated the relationship between organizational empowerment and organizational commitment. This finding can have the implication for human resource managers that in order to generate employee attachment to their organization, the values of the organization should be appealing to the employees, employees should be afforded the opportunities to grow personally and professionally because when they feel competent to perform their job, and impact dimensions of psychological empowerment.

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