The Mediating Role of Psychological Empowerment Aspects on Transformational Leadership in ZTB Bank

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of psychological empowerment aspects of employees on their organizational commitment, which was performed in the branches of ZTB Bank, KM province. In this study, a questionnaire was used to collect data. For data collection, the questionnaires were distributed among the employees of branches in a completely random manner, and finally, 264 subjects formed the study sample size. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze data and test the hypotheses. The results showed that all dimensions of employees' empowerment are effective on their organizational commitment. The aspects of feeling of meaningfulness and feeling to have the selection right had the most and the least impact on employees' organizational commitment level, respectively.

Key words: Organizational commitment; Empowerment; ZTB Bank; KM

Introduction

Today's world, especially the world of organizations, is facing dramatic and continuous changes and developments, and all aspects of organizations, including internal and external environments, human and non-human factors, etc., all are changing with a stunning acceleration (Jiang and Li, 2008). In any organization, either manufacturing or service-providing, the costumers are the most important factor for the preservation and survival of the organization (Tavanazadeh & Aligholi, 2014). In such circumstances, the managers have not enough time to control the employees and need to spend most of their time and energy to identify the internal and external environments of the organization, and thus, they have to assign other daily tasks to the staff. Therefore, nowadays, the most important source of competitive advantage for organizations is known as committed, motivated, creative and competent employees (Kuo et al, 2010; Matthews et al 2003; Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). So the importance of qualitative development and increased empowerment of human resources has become progressively more pronounced (Erisen et al., 2009; Gholifar and Gholami, 2014). Employees' empowerment is a method used by managers to increase productivity through increasing the employees' commitment to the organization and vice versa, which is a valuable approach capable of establishing balance between management full control and the employees' freedom of action. Empowerment is a different way of working together, and its main purpose is to change the management structure from traditional and hierarchical form to a partnership structure (Seyed Ameri et al., 2010, 22; Jha, 2014). Scholars have identified empowerment's impact on management practices, as 70 percent of organizations now implement a portion of empowerment on their workforce (Lawler et al., 2001). Advocates of empowerment programs believe that people are naturally endowed with distinct skills and power that could blossom with training and constant practice (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Empowerment employees is associated with great benefits for the organization and lead to organizational learning (Allahyari et al, 2011), job satisfaction (Islam et al, 2014; Bitmiş and Ergeneli, 2011; Hill et al, 2014; Wang and Lee, 2009), reduced intention to leave the organization (Islam et al, 2014), OCB or organizational citizenship behavior (Jha, 2014), job involvement (Quinones et al, 2013) and job performance improvement (Hill et al, 2014; Chiang and Hsieh, 2012). Improved organizational commitment is among the results obtained through employees' empowerment (Hill et al, 2014; Islam et al, 2014; Kuo et al, 2010). Nowadays, organizations incur unwanted huge costs due to the non-commitment of their employees to the organization (such as the costs associated with staff quit, their absence, as well as the costs of recruitment, attracting and training of new recruits, etc) (Zahedi et al., 2010). Thus, considering the organizational commitment of employees seems to be crucial for all the organizations. Jaworski and Kohli (1993) pointed out that committed employees tend to be more willing to make personal sacrifices for their organizations. In addition, highly committed employees are more likely to relate themselves with the goals and values of the organization. These employees oftentimes devote extra time to work and are proud of being members of the organization (Kuo et al, 2010). Due to the positive effects of psychological empowerment and organizational commitment on manpower and organization performance, this study aimed to examine the impact of psychological empowerment aspects on employees' organizational commitment.

Empowerment

In today's changing environment, human capital is a precious capital with a fundamental role. The new age is the area of competition over resources and capitals. The major industrial countries as the conquerors of such a realm have focused on efficiency of resources and capitals, and in the light of educated people and professionals, they have launched the engine of growth and development and achieved inventions and innovations. Access to these innovations that has revived the economy of developed countries is subject to entrepreneurship (Shafae et al., 2012).

Empowerment has been regarded as an important concept because it potentially affects outcomes that benefit individuals and organizations (Han & et al, 2009). The concept of empowerment was introduced by Kanter (1977) in the field of management (Islam et al, 2014). In the 1990s substantial interest was generated in this concept (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995).

Empowerment is a term widely used in organizational sciences; however, no consensus has been achieved on its definitions (Cunningham & Baldry, 1996). Many experts consider empowerment as creation of a state for people to feel they have control over their own destiny and can achieve personal and organizational goals. Empowerment is in fact a continuous and permanent process, and is analyzed in a dynamic environment at different levels. Empowerment refers to motivational or psychological issues, structural changes, cultural and historical elements, values and attitudes in organizational context (Wilson, 1995).

Researchers had, until the 1990s, considered issues such as the delegation of authority, distribution of decision-making power to lower-level employees, and facilitating staff access to information as empowerment of human resources (Blanchard et al., 2001; Gholifar and Gholami, 2014).

Spreitzer (1997), after an extensive review of the literature, defined two general perspectives of empowerment within a business context, the relational perspective and the psychological perspective (Matthews et al 2003). Relational empowerment has been referred to in the literature as top-down processing as well as mechanistic (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998).

In this perspective, it is believed that empowerment occurs when higher levels within a hierarchy share power and decentralization of decision-making authority and responsibility to lower level employees (Spreitzer, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998; Mills and Ungson, 2003), The relational perspective maintains that it is the implementation of new processes and the distribution of power that empower employees (Matthews et al 2003). However, whilst management can create a context for empowerment, employees must choose to be empowered. Empowerment is not something that management does to employees, but a mindset that employees have about their role in the organization; a form of intrinsic motivation termed psychological empowerment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Barton and Barton, 2011). So, psychological perspective of empowerment focuses on the employee's perception of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Researchers studying psychological empowerment, also known as organic or bottom-up processing, maintain that empowerment is achieved only when psychological states produce a perception of empowerment within the employee (Mishra and Spreitzer, 1998, Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). Spreitzer (2007) proposes the concept of psychological empowerment, which received most attention in the literature (Seibert et al., 2011).

In the current study, the psychological empowerment perspective was used.

The psychological approach to empowerment focused on the intrinsic motivation and not on the managerial practices that are used to increase the level of power owned by the employees (Dee et al., 2003). Spreitzer (2007) describes psychological empowerment as a group of psychological states essential for a person to feel that he or she can control the relationship to his or her own work. Instead of focusing on managerial practices which share power among employees at different levels, the psychological vantage point focus on employees' experience of their own work and the nature of that unique experience (Vacharakiat, 2008). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) believe that concept of "Psychological Empowerment" could not be defined as "one dimensional issue" they consider that as the process of inner motivation increase among employees who recognize four cognitive areas of impact, competency, meaning and choice (self-determination). Based on this conceptualization, Spreitzer (1995) developed a scale to measure empowerment: Meaning reflects the value a task holds in relation to one's own belief system; Competence measures the degree to which one is able to perform a task successfully with possessed skills and abilities; Self-determination measures the amount of autonomy or control one has over his / her tasks / behaviors; Impact estimates the extent to which one is confident that he / she can make a difference in organizational outcomes at work (Li et al, 2012).

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment can be defined as an emotional commitment that reflects the employee's strong desire to stay in a particular organization when there is an opportunity to change jobs. Organizational commitment is a degree level of a person to the organization's goals, substantial effort for the organization and the willingness to maintain membership in the organization. Hunt et al. (1985) argue that all organizations should have committed staff, since high commitment leads to lower turnover and increased work performance (Shafae et al., 2012). Today, the organizations pay much attention to their employees, since the experience has proven that with meeting the material needs or the so-called external needs as much as possible, the psychophysical or internal needs will be satisfies more evenly as well. Non- satisfying this group of needs significantly reduces the efficiency (productivity) of staff and makes the employees bored of their work, and thus, their willing to do the job would reduce (Khoshpanjeh, et al., 2012).

Employees 'organizational commitment is considered a critical factor which influences the employees' behavior of bringing positive benefits to an organization (Kuo et al, 2010).

Like other concepts of organizational behavior, several perceptions and definitions of organizational commitment have been provided by management scholars. Porter et al (1974) define organizational commitment as a factor influencing the strong tendency to stay in the organization while having personal belief in accepting the goals and values of the organization and engaging in its activities, and consider its measurement criteria as motivation, willingness to continue work and acceptance of the organization values (Porter et al., 1974). Somers defines effective commitment as a kind of interdependence and integration to the organization, which represent as acceptance of the organization values and willingness to stay in the organization (Somers, 1995). Swailes (2002) states that:

Organizational commitment reflects positive feelings towards the organization and its values. In fact, measurement of organizational commitment includes assessment of proportionality and correlation between the values and beliefs of employees and the organization (Swailes, 2002).

Kuo and et al (2010) believed that organizational commitment is commonly defined as employees' interest in, and connection to, an organization. Employees who are committed to their firms tend to identify with the objectives and goals of their organization.

As seems evident, organizational commitment represents a kind of personal, emotional and normative attachment to the self role, organization and its values and goals, which expresses great interests at micro and macro levels for the organization.

In the present study, the Meyer and Allen (1991) framework was used to measure the organizational commitment, which has come to the focus of researchers attention in the recent decade as a dominant framework in organizational commitment studies, composed of three dimensions:

1. Affective commitment: It includes the employees' dependency to be identified by their affiliation with the organization and involvement in organizational activities.

2. Ongoing Commitment: It includes a commitment based on valuing the organization and involvement of the employees in the organization life.

3. Normative commitment: It includes people's feelings about the need to stay in the organization (Tsai and Huang, 2008; Meyer and Allen, 1991).

For effectiveness and continued success of the organizations, the managers need to have special characteristics, capabilities, potential competencies, long experience and knowledge and social -communicational skills. Also, to create an effective management, the objectives should be first considered. As such, in implementing the programs, the managers should primarily rely on resources, especially their own human resources (Rahnama et al., 2011).

Research conceptual model

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) believed that "organizational commitment can be enhanced through certain organizational characteristics. Empowerment is of one of the variables that its role in increasing employees' organizational commitment has been studied. A review of conducted studies in the field of empowerment and organizational commitment suggests that empowering staff is effective in their organizational commitment, both directly and indirectly, and also through other variables such as job satisfaction (Kuo and et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2007; Bhatnagar, 2005; Hill et al., 2014; Islam et al., 2014). Therefore, due to considering four dimensions of being feeing of meaningfulness, feeling of competence, having the right of choice and sense of efficacy for psychological empowerment, and three dimensions of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment for organizational commitment, the research conceptual model was developed as follows.

According to the research conceptual model, the research hypotheses can be expressed as follows:

H1: The employees' sense of meaningfulness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.

H2: The employees' sense of competency has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.

H3: The employees' sense of having right of choice competency has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.

H4: The employees' sense of effectiveness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.

Materials and Methods

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to obtain required data for the analysis. A 5-factor Likert scale as range of "completely disagree" to "strongly agree" was used as a scale to measure the questions. In the questionnaire, for developing the questions related to psychological empowerment and to develop the questions related to organizational commitment, the following studies were used, respectively:

- Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment as a motivational construct which comprises four cognition, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact
- Meyer and Allen's (1991) three components model of organizational commitment model, three major constructs were considered, namely affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment

After preparing the questionnaire, for assessment the reliability of the questionnaire, a total of 30 questionnaires were pre-testing among employees of ZTB Bank. The Cronbach's alpha method was used to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all the variables, and the questionnaire totally, was greater than 0.7. Also, the questionnaire validity was confirmed by experts. Thus, the questionnaire had the validity and reliability required to be distributed among the study population.

The sample

The present study sample consisted of employees in different branches of ZTB Bank in KM province. For this purpose, 300 questionnaires were distributed among the customers within 3 weeks in a completely random method, and finally, 264 questionnaires were identified suitable for the study. In Table 1, demographic information of the respondents is presented.

Table 1: Demographic variables

Variable	Dimensions	Frequency	Frequency percentage
Gender	Male	196	74
	Female	68	26
Marital Status	Single	71	27
	Married	193	73
Age	Less than 30	48	18
	30-35	78	29
	40-36	91	34
	41 and older	51	19
Education level	Diploma and lower levels	18	7
	Associate	44	16
	BA	128	48
	Masters and higher degrees	78	29

Data analysis and hypotheses testing

Given that the study model measures the relationships between several latent variables simultaneously, thus, we used the structural equation modeling to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. This method is the statistical modeling technique that encompasses other techniques such as multivariate regression, factor analysis and path analysis, and its main focus is on the latent variables, which are determined by measurable parameters and clear

variables. The method advantage is to simultaneously investigate the relationships between the variables.

The structural equation model has two parts: Measurement model & Structural model. Measurement model relates a set of observed variables to the latent variables. In contrast, the structural model relates the latent variables through a series of direct and indirect relationships together. In fact, in the present study, the structural component is used for testing the hypotheses.

Prior to testing the hypotheses, using the research conceptual model, an important point to be considered is the suitability of the study model for investigating the relationships between variables, which is visible through the fit indices presented in the final LISREL output . In Table 2, the fit indices for the present study are given.

Table 2: Model fit indices

Indices	Appropriate value	Obtained numbers	
Chi-square / Degree of freedom ratio	$\chi^2/df<3$	1.64	Right fit
P-value	<0.05 P-value	0.0000	Right fit
RMSEA	RMSEA< 0.08	0.061	Right fit
Fitness index	Higher than 0.9	0.89	Relatively right fit
Comparative fit index	Higher than 0.9	0.94	Right fit
Normalized fit index (NFI)	Higher than 0.9	0.91	Right fit

Examining the model fit indices indicates that all the model fitness indices, apart from the fit index with a value of 0.89 (permitted value higher than 0.9) that represents a relatively good fitness, show an appropriate fitness for the model. Thus, in general, we can say that the study model has a relatively appropriate fit to examine the relationships between the research variables and test the hypotheses.

To evaluate the research hypotheses, the results from the calculations of LISREL software were used in two states of the standard model (Figure 2) and the research model in meaningfulness state (Figure 3).
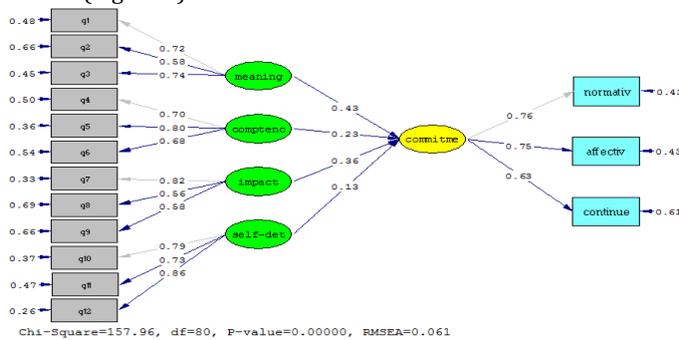

Chi-Square=157.96, df=80, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.061

Figure 2: Research model at standard state

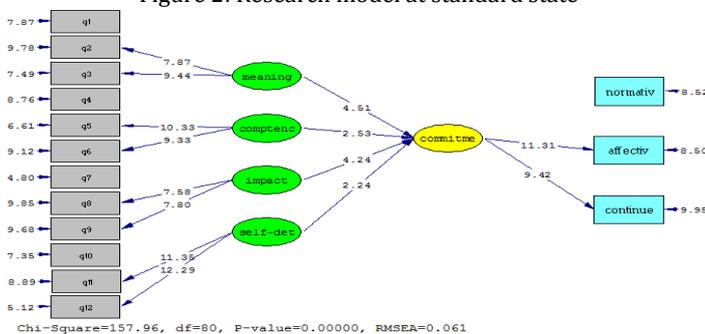Chi-Square=157.96, df=80, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.061

Figure 3: Research model at meaningfulness state

As already mentioned, in order to test the research hypotheses, the structural equation model was used to examine the relationships between latent variables. In the following, we examined the research hypotheses:

H1: The employees' sense of meaningfulness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment. Our results indicated that the meaningfulness sense dimension with the standard factor loading of 0.43 and t = 4.51has influence on organizational commitment of the

employees. Then, the hypothesis H1 is approved. In other words, higher feeling of being meaningful in employees would lead to higher organizational commitment in them.

H2: The employees' sense of competency has a direct impact on their organizational commitment. Our results indicated that the competency sense dimension with the standard factor loading of 0.23 and t = 2.531has influence on organizational commitment of the employees. Then, the hypothesis H2 is approved. In other words, higher feeling of competency in employees would lead to higher organizational commitment in them.

H3: The employees' sense of having right of choice has a direct impact on their organizational commitment. Our results indicated that the sense of having right of choice dimension with the standard factor loading of 0.13 and t = 2.24 has influence on organizational commitment of the employees. Then, the hypothesis H3 is approved. In other words, if the employees feel that have more right of choice for their work issues, their organizational commitment would increase.

H4: The employees' sense of effectiveness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment. Our results indicated that the effectiveness sense dimension with the standard factor loading of 0.36 and t = 4.24 has influence on organizational commitment of the employees. Then, the hypothesis H4 is approved. In other words, higher feeling of effectiveness in employees regarding work conditions and organization would lead to higher organizational commitment in them. The summary results of the research hypotheses testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary results of the research hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficient (standard)	Significance level	Result
H1: The employees' sense of meaningfulness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.	0.43	4.51	Hypothesis approval
H2: The employees' sense of competency has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.	0.23	2.53	Hypothesis approval
H3: The employees' sense of having right of choice has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.	0.13	2.24	Hypothesis approval
H4: The employees' sense of effectiveness has a direct impact on their organizational commitment.	0.36	4.24	Hypothesis approval

Conclusions & Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of psychological empowerment dimensions on employees' organizational commitment, which was performed in different branches of ZTB Bank in KM province. For this purpose, four aspects of sense of meaningfulness, sense of competence, sense of have the right of choice and sense of efficacy (Spreitzer, 1995) were considered as the dimensions of empowerment. Also, the Meyer and Allen framework (1991) was used to measure organizational commitment, which included three dimensions of affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Testing the research hypotheses suggested that all research hypotheses were confirmed. The results indicate that the meaningfulness sense with the standardized factor loading of 0.43 is the most effective empowerment dimension on employees' organizational commitment. The feeling of having the right of choice with the standardized factor loading of 0.13 is the weakest factor affecting organizational commitment. Therefore, the results showed that the developing the employees' empowerment can produce positive results for the organization through organizational commitment. In fact, the employees who are mentally competent would be more committed ones as well and can create competitive advantage for the organizations. According to the results of examining the study hypotheses, in order to improve the employees' organizational commitment, the management of ZTB Bank is recommended to strengthen the staff's sense of having the right of choice by empowering them in their scope of duties and making the working conditions flexible. Also, through the use of practical and periodic training and improving the skills and knowledge of the employees and providing positive feedback on positive performance of them, they improve the staff's sense of competency. Giving bonuses based on effective performance to the employees (not just based on membership) and improving communications and obtaining and using the employees' comments staff in the management of the bank branch would improve the sense of effectiveness in the staff. It is recommended to increase employees' organizational commitment to the organization through creation a convenient and friendly work environment and employees' involvement in organizational decision making, management supports of the staff and developing effective work teams and strengthening the meaningfulness aspect.

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