



WORKPLACE EMPOWERMENT AS A PRE-REQUISITE TO ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore the role of workplace empowerment on organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the university by using the qualitative survey method. The sample of the study was selected by using purposive sampling technique and it comprised of 10 female university teachers. Two interview protocols, one each for workplace empowerment and organizational commitment were used to collect the data and thematic analysis was applied to analyze the participants' interview transcripts. Results of the present study assist the prior researches that the workplace empowerment is the main contributor of organizational commitment. The results showed that teachers have a very little level of workplace empowerment as a result they were committed to personal level of interest rather than that of organizational support. The study suggested that institute should create fostering environment to enhance the perceptions of empowerment among employees that will positively influence them and it will eventually increase institution effectiveness and commitment.

Key words: Workplace empowerment, organizational commitment

Introduction

The competent and motivated employees are significant and primary factor for any organization. Currently, it is of a great concern for organizations to present better feature services and value to enhance organization completion. This may be possible if organization are more concerned about their employees. The organizations can take best out from their staff by improving the skills and efficiency of their employees (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian & Wilk, 2002). Now organizations are starting programs to improve employee's performance. By keeping the continuation in this effort it will develop the feeling of empowerment which builds feelings of belongingness among employees. The organizations can be successful by giving employees a sense of control to do their task effectively and take confirmity from employees in decisions that affect them at work (Mullins, 2009).

Empowerment is the valuable concept and allowing employees to determine their own work goals, take decisions, and resolve issues within their sphere of job and control. Empowerment is a multidimensional concept and not only helpful for organizations but it also assists employees in their societal life through which they are able to get control over their own lives. In an empowered work setting, employees have access to information, resources, opportunities, decision making, institutional support and probability to learn and grow (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

Empowered employees have the ability to attain greater level of efficiency. Workplace empowerment is a popular management concept now days in which employees feel more independence, confidence on their abilities and potential to influence on the organization. Empowerment take place when organization gives independence, power, control and support to their employees to continue their job related responsibilities. Workplace empowerment provides a greater inspiration to employees by meeting their needs (Laschinger, Almost & Tuer-Hodes, 2003). It encourages the employees to work in such a way that they are able to provide best of their knowledge, abilities and their professional skills to the organization. Workplace empowerment flourishes in those organizations which values their employee's work and generates learning sources for their employees. On the part of the management, empowerment needs supportive managers who belief on their employees (McShane, Glinow & Sharma, 2008).

The concept of empowerment is a broad concept, in a study of workplace empowerment that may be either by a business view or an academic perspective, it always highlights the connection of employees' commitment towards their organization. Studies indicates that workplace empowerment of staff has a significant effect to improve the organization services of employees and their productivity (Samat, Ramayah, & Saad, 2006). It develops trust and mutual understanding between employee and management (Daft, 2008). Another research shows that teacher's workplace empowerment help him to enhance their commitment towards organization that will definitely help them to improve their professional life (Dee, Alan, Henkin & Duemer, 2003). The workplace empowerment leads towards committed workforce that is highly satisfied within their organization (Robbins, judge & Sanghi, 2010). In educational organization when teachers are given suitable working condition then it facilitate them to enhance their proficiency and develop a sense of commitment towards the organization that will also support them to advance in their career as well (Dee et al, 2003). As highlighted in the staff empowerment literature, the empowered employees are more creative and valuable for an institution and having highly loyal and committed staff.

Organizational commitment is consider as an employee's affecting association for the organization based on the sense of work involvement, loyalty and trust on the standards of the organization. In order to develop commitment in employees, organizations should involve them in decisions, to facilitate them with favorable resources leading to success, giving education and by offering valuable rewards (Daft,2008). A clear perception of both personal and organizational values develop an employee with highest degree of organizational commitment (Kouzes & Posner,2010). A *continued commitment* is an ongoing process through which employees express their concerns for the organization and its well being (Luthans, 2008). The study of Orgambídez-Ramos and Borrego-Alés (2014) has explored that employees' contentment towards job is highly associated with empowerment and empowered employee is more committed and effective for the organization. Their study showed a strong impact on the organizational outcomes through empowering the work setting and progressive opportunities.

In Pakistan, the excessive workloads, low income, poor working environment and lack of financial incentives are the main reasons of lack of competent and committed teachers in teaching profession (Ehsan & Naeem, 2011). To deal with this issue it is significant to

improve the working settings and encourage the young generation to join this profession with full commitment because teachers are one of the most essential component that play an important role in the success of institutes in a competitive environment. In this perspective, this study provides evidence to the university management to understand how the workplace empowerment increases the level of organizational commitment. So, the university management can introduce various strategies to generate such environment that may enhance teacher's commitment and produce competent and high contended staff. A number of researches have been completed on the workplace empowerment within Pakistan but all these researches have emphasized on other aspects with quantitative paradigm. As the university faculty members teachers are one of the most important factors and main components that contribute towards the accomplishments of universities in a dynamic and competitive environment (Ahmed, Salih & Khan, 2011). There is a need to understand the function of workplace empowerment and to examine what female university teachers think about its function. So to fill that gap present study will examine the role of workplace empowerment works as a prerequisite to the organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in public sector university of Pakistan.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore the different aspects of the workplace empowerment of female teaching faculty in the university.
- Explore the different aspects of the organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the university.
- Investigate the role of workplace empowerment on organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the university.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were:

1. What was the different aspect of the workplace empowerment of female teaching faculty in the universities?
 - 1.1 What was the role of Opportunity aspect of empowerment?
 - 1.2 What was the role of information aspect of empowerment?
 - 1.3 What was the role of resources aspect of empowerment?
 - 1.4 What was the role of support aspect of empowerment?
 - 1.5 What was the role of decision making aspect of empowerment?
2. What are the different aspects of the organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the universities?
 - 2.1 What was the role of Affective Commitment?
 - 2.2 What was the role of Continuance Commitment?
 - 2.3 What was the role of Normative Commitment?
3. How workplace empowerment enhance organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the universities?

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of workplace empowerment on organizational commitment of female teaching faculty in the university and qualitative survey method was used for this research. Qualitative survey method is based on the open ended questions related to the topic and participants have to give their responses to each question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is used for the exploration of meanings and experiences of people (Fink, 2003). This approach was helpful in present study to understand the views of teachers about workplace empowerment and organizational commitment.

The sample of the current study comprised of female university teachers from one public university of the Pakistan. In this study, the sample consists of 10 female teachers from five departments, two from each and was selected by using purposive sampling technique. List of female teachers (who have more than five year experience) was obtained from the registrar office. Four participants were Phd degree holders and one of participant was enrolled in a Phd programme at that time. Five participants hold MS degree. The experience of selected participants lied between five to ten years and interview schedule was developed by in order to collect the data.

The interviews were conducted and the time duration of each interview is 30 - 45 minutes. The researchers recorded the interviews and transcribe these interviews into a written text with the help of thematic analysis. The participants' opinion becomes embodied in their words. One 30 - 45 minutes recorded interview takes almost 4 to 6 hours to transcribe. After transcribing the data the researchers brackets the responses that are interesting. The purpose of bracketing the data in interview transcription is to decrease and shape the material into a form in which it can be displayed. Then categories were developed because categories are the main grouping of key features of the text. For example, the text concerning the teacher workplace empowerment, the opportunity, support, information, availability of resources, participation in decision making are the key categories of the text. The researcher studied the categories for thematic connection within them. Themes help in making sense of descriptive information and then the researcher analyze the whole data.

Results and Discussion

The process of power sharing with employees enhances the confidence level and sense of importance within employees in the organization. The result of these efforts will be that employees come up with more innovative ideas and more commitment to achieve the targets of an organization. The research provides confirmatory evidence that workplace empowerment and organizational commitment were highly linked with each other. Workplace empowerment and organizational commitment with its different aspect were being discussed in subsequent section.

Echelon of professional development

Employees which are working in an empowered workplace environment provide benefits not only to the organization but also to themselves. At workplace empowered employees are responding with responsibility, enthusiasm and offer their best services to the organization (Blanchard, 2001). The study has emphasized the value of creating conducive environment which may enabled employees to complete their task in an efficient way. Pakistan is like one of the under developed country where sharing and distribution of authority is always treated as a matter of ego and self-respect even at grass root level. In this study, teachers mentioned that university normally provides opportunities like workshops, training and seminars but these

opportunities are not much effective for gaining actual professional skills. According to them, there is no scholarship opportunity for them also. As one of the female participants stated that “the majority of these trainings are knowledge based while skill related trainings are very few”.

It was also revealed by teachers that the mostly trainings were organized by the university without their consent. That is why, these trainings do not cater the need of teachers and it was reflected in their interviews also. One of the participants said that “at the end of every training workshop organizer staff got filled feedback Performa with suggestion for the improvement of training next time but these suggestions were never reflected in their next training programs.”

As these opportunities play an important role for the professional development and career enhancement of an employee. So organization has to empowered staff to work effectively and involve them in the information procedures, organizational structure, essential trainings for problem solving and decision making. Pearson and Moomaw (2005) have also mentioned that empowering staff is a significant factor in the success of organization and an empowered teacher is more appropriate and capable in solving the problems of today’s institutes.

Awareness about Organization

Every organization has its formal and informal communication channel. But the effectiveness of the organization depends upon reliable and timely official communication. In the universities formal communication is usually upward and downward (From VC and Registrar office to department and vice versa). The findings revealed that mostly teachers complained they have restricted access of information and they have to rely on informal communication channel to get the information about their organization. Teachers thinks that this information is very important for them so they must have access of this information. Because access of information is a right that bill has been passed by the national assembly.

One participant shared her view that “I have no easy access to information if I want to get some information then I have to put my personal efforts and people in the offices usually resist in giving information”.

The findings indicated that teachers were aware only about the basic promotional criteria. Also they mentioned that they were not familiar with the whole university teacher but only with their departmental colleagues. The teachers wants to get be connected with their colleagues in the university to share knowledge and resources. They all emphasize the need of common platform or a body in which they can build relationships and communication channel with their colleagues. According to Laschinger and Finegan, (2004) the empowered employees are able to practice the good relationship with colleagues and management which ultimately lessen the grievances and promote a high quality services.

Support

This study revealed that teachers’ gets support as portrayed by in interviews that it was mainly emotional support and being provided on personal relationship. None of the teacher mentioned any kind of organizational support in line term of their personal problem and in stressful movements. There was no mechanism of organizational support in the university.

Teachers were agreed that sometime they get support in terms of flexible timing from Head of Department but there was no system of support. It was mentioned in literature that if teachers get encouragement and career guidance from Head of Department and their colleagues then it will make them contended and enhances their commitment. According to Ramus (2002) organizational policies and supportive management behavior are more likely to enhance the employees more active participation in organizational initiatives. It showed that if employees get support then he/she will get involved in the progress and effectiveness of the organization (Chelladurai, 2006). These above mentioned findings are consistent with the idea usually depicted in literature that staff is more committed, contended and will work more effectively when they are able to organize their task personally and have the power to work within boundaries.

Availability of resources

The resources were centralized in university and teachers have to struggle to get access to any type of resources. As most of the participant said it's a struggling university and do not have enough resources available. The finding of the study indicated that all the financial resources were centralized and allocated to the department by the treasure office by keeping in view the needs of departments. Some teachers mentioned that although Head of Departments allocates funds to purchase books and equipment's but mostly it is decided centrally. As far as physical resources are concerned there is shortage of physical infrastructure and resources in the forms of books and equipments. However they (teachers) have the access only to the available limited resources and equipment under their department. The condition of physical structure in institute is alarming. Even senior faculty is used shared staff room. Mostly teachers complained that they have no separate workstation. One participant replied that "university still struggling for all these sources... we don't have enough space for sitting and we don't have any space for research as well... we have to sit in combine office... so don't have proper environment of research".

Participation in decision

Results of the present study also reveal that teachers opinion were usually asked certain decisions related to their task but were not necessarily would be considered while making decision. Mostly teachers said that policy decisions were centralized so they have no role in such type of decisions. There was a certain limit in involving departmental decisions but again ultimately the decision making authority is Head of Department. One of the participant also shared her view that "in departmental meetings usually we are asked to give suggestions but suggestions are not incorporated or depend upon Head of Department"

Organizational Commitment

Another objective of the study was to explore the different aspect of organizational commitment of female teaching faculty. The results of this study disclose that mostly teachers were committed to the university because most of them were graduate of this university. They have long lasting affiliation with it. But at the same time some teachers have no high level of association with the university and they were ready to quit university if they can find more

benefit from other university. Majority of teachers have a view that they started job with their desire but now it become a necessary evil.

One female respondent agreed that “Yes it’s a matter of necessity that I support my family, kids schooling their brought up and even my own desires they are being satisfied with this job”.

One participant expresses her opinion that “if I left this organization my family setup may get disturb”. The teachers showed their non-commitment only because of the personal benefits. One of the respondent stated that “it depends on the nature of the job. If another job related to my interest, objectives and offer me a better opportunity then I will leave this organization”.

The results of the current study confirmed that organizational commitment was significantly affected by workplace empowerment. The organizational commitment within the institute can be accomplished by encouraging creativity, independence, solving issues with an open and honest sharing of ideas among all the employees in a non-threatening environment. Empowered employees always take pride in their work (Ahmed, Salih & Khan, 2011). So the improvement in empowerment condition will lead towards the organizational commitment. Fundamentally it’s the organizational commitment that guided the employees to become emotionally associated with the organization and developed a desired to contribute for organizational achievements and enhance their job performance (Locke, 2009). Workplace empowerment engages employees with the knowledge, skill and confidence they required to attain professional and for personal best (William, 2005).

Conclusion and recommendation

The workplace empowerment leads to higher level of organizational commitment and motivates teachers to work with more devotion and loyalty. This study has been concluded that teachers performance can be improved by access of professional development opportunities at workplace, support from management and colleagues; ensure the availability of resources to fulfill the need of employees and participation in decision making motivate the employees to do their job with great enthusiasm. In institutes teachers are required necessary autonomy at workplace to perform their job well that should be realized by the organization. In the light of this study, following steps can be taken to increase level of workplace empowerment of university teachers for the better utilization of their abilities in this regard.

- The organization might be creating conducive environment where employees are having the access of information, career related opportunities, support from top management and availability of resources and engagement in decision making process.
- The Government also takes initiatives in policy making to empowered teachers which in turn work for the benefit and contribute in the overall success of country.

Education is the backbone of a nation. If the teacher of that backbone having no enough resources, support and career development opportunity with their Job then what will the future of that nation. So the institutes need to be more concerned about their teachers working



conditions and try to take best steps to make them more committed with their job. It will energize the teachers and their efforts will be in full swing to build up the nation.

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