Empowerment Of Academic and Non Academic Staff at a Local University: Exploring The Relationship with Organizational Support and Employee Commitment

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Abstract

To maximize the output of organization is a cherished objective of every competent manager. One of the effective ways of meeting the targets of organization is to empower its employees. Thus the employees become part and participate in the achievement of the organizational targets. Since universities are larger organizations with systematic rules and regulations, the present study is carried out in a local university to explore a)the correlation between organizational empowerment and perceived organizational support; b) correlation between organizational empowerment and employee commitment; c) correlation between empowerment and organizational trust.

To achieve the objectives of this study, literature was reviewed exhaustively and indicators of empowerment were identified. After identification of indicators an instrument was developed, piloted and consistency was calculated. The reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of tool was .710. The tool was administered on 250 academic and nonacademic subjects of two faculties of University of Sindh Jamshoro. The data was analyzed through SPSS 16 in four parts, i.e., demographical information of respondents, Pearson correlation, Independent sample t test and one way ANOVA.

Some of findings of study were: University teachers are highly empowered. The female employees are more empowered than male employees; Subjects with higher qualification are more empowered than lower qualification employees.

Keywords: Empowerment, organizational commitment, organizational support, organizational trust

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Introduction

Empowerment is a process that legally authorizes and enables the teaching and non teaching staff to take some decisions on their own for the betterment of the organization without seeking formal permission of the superiors. The nature of the decision depends upon the level of the empowerment and structural grades of the staff. Empowerment is a state of trusting every member of the staff. It is an act of sharing power, authority and responsibility. It is a self- empowered position that creates a sense of freedom and responsibility (http://human resources.about.com/). Kanter (1977) believes that employee empowerment is directly connected with the outcomes of organizations like effectiveness, innovation and better performance. Chan, Taylor and Markham(2008) add that positive work behavior of empowered staff is also directly related with perceived organizational support, employee commitment and organizational trust.

Nevertheless, the higher education institutions in Pakistan are currently passing through a process of change. In the era of globalization, their survival is not possible without adapting to change. Kerr and Gade (1987) believe that change is a rule not the exception in higher education.

The universities that manage and handle the change effectively can come out of the crisis successfully. To Seymour (1988), although change is inevitable, yet it is controllable and manageable. Spreitzer (1995) believes that the survival of universities is only in innovation. The universities, that are flexible and responsive in the current competitive environment and empower the staff after giving proper training, can make rapid progress. Pitts (2000) adds that staff empowerment strategy is gaining popularity in terms of management reform these days.

Literature review
History of Empowerment

The term empowerment was previously used as freedom of work (Traynor, 2003). During 14th and 16th century B.C. Freedom was given to the employees by powerful members of society and the same was perceived as a special kind of privilege. During this period, this privilege or freedom was granted to individuals to handle or manage towns, lands or states. This freedom or empowerment helped the recipients to take independent decisions regarding how to utilize their resources properly and how to get maximum benefits by using existing resources, i.e., men and materials. (Baumans, 1988) as cited in Traynor, 2003).

With the passing of time, managerial theory developed and many new markets of farming, manufacturing and technology were evolved. A paradigm was developed and named as Classical Organizational Design Theory (CODT). According to this theory the main factors for an effective organization are, clear hierarchical structure with properly specified chain of command and levels of management, labor specialization as well as impersonal working environment (Greenberg, 2005). However managers also realized that output cannot be maximized

without job satisfaction to employees therefore the CODT was replaced by another theory known as Neoclassical Organizational Design Theory (NODT).

Empowerment can also be traced back to the Hawthorne studies published in 2004 (Pitts, 2005) where supervisors were entrusted with techniques to improve job satisfaction while at work. The existing concept of empowerment emerged in the late 1980s. Peter in1982 scientifically started the modern movement of empowerment. (Wilkinson, 1998).Old bureaucratic models where creativity was stifled with more emphasis on rules and regulation was replaced by more participative management where lower level managers were given leeway to with an intuitive type of management. Innovative managers and supervisors were asked to treat their workers by giving them more respect, treat them as equals, give them more freedom to decide and to trust them (Wilkinson, 1998).

Empowerment Defined

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, 2000, the word empowerment means, "to invest with legal power or to authorize". Rose 2000 defined the status of empowerment as governmental mandated in programs started for reducing poverty in 1960's. The word with passage of time was changed and now has many meanings.

Factors of Empowerment

The main theme of empowerment is based upon the X and Y theory of Douglas McGregor.. According to Bowen and Lowler

(1992) information, award, knowledge, authority and information are some of the factors affecting empowerment

Employee Empowerment

Presently the concept of empowerment to employees is a basic assumption for successful managerial technique. According to (Spreitzer, 2006; Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008) more than 70% organizations implemented empowerment initiatives for their employees since it affected productivity and job satisfaction positively.

Perceived Organizational Support

The researchers in the fields of psychology and management have shown much interest in perceived organizational support (Rhodes and Eisenberger & Armeli, 2002). Different researchers have defined perceived organizational support in different ways. Perceived organizational support is an attitude of the employees of an organization which are created due to certain catalysts. Some of those factors are fair and equal treatment by higher level managers, positive supervisory support, rewards on effective performance and provision of fair and conducive work environment (Rhoades and Eisenberger& ,Armeli 2002). According to Aube et al., (2007) Perceived organizational support has direct proportional effect on Employee commitment.

Employee commitment

Employee commitment can be defined as identification and involvement of an individual in the organization. An employee who finds conducive atmosphere, shared values

and fair treatment responds by a feeling of commitment towards the organizational goals and loyalty to organizational culture. According to Porter et al., (1974), this commitment is based on following three factors:

1. Employee accepts the goals and values of organization as his own.
2. Employee remains motivated and displays willingness to work.
3. This leads to stable tenure of retention of the employee.

Organizational Trust

Trust may be defined as the main component in all human relationships. Without trust, no human relation can flourish. Trust is essential among all horizontal and vertical echelons of an organization..Sitkin & Roth, (1993) defines trust as "an attitude, belief or an expectation", of a person towards the interests of another person, group or organization. It is the willingness displayed in behavioral action by words, deeds and actions in favor of another person or organization (Cook & Wall, 1980). The absence of trust perceived in boss subordinate relationships undermine functional coherence (Gilbert & Tang, McCune, 1998). They further assert that such managers are less effective and less productive than those who trust their subordinates. Literature has revealed that lack of certainty and safety among the organizational relationship may result in the form of low performance and productivity (Cox, 1993). On the other hand if the employees feel that they are betrayed, cheated or mishandled by managers ,they will not work for the organization whole heartedly and may engage in destructive activities (Gilbert & Tang, 1998).

Objectives of the study

To date, no survey has been conducted in Pakistan regarding empowerment within private or public sector organizations. This study may serve as a foundation for further exploration. The research has been undertaken in the University of Sindh, a public sector academic institution. We have defined academic and non-academic staff in light of Codes, Act and statutes of the University. According to Sindh University Act 1971 and Code book of the rules and regulation, academic staff is defined as any person who is appointed to teach, carry out research and devote time for students' counseling. Similarly, non-academic staff comprises on any individual who is appointed to perform administrative responsibilities stipulated in the employment order. The research objectives and hypotheses have been developed as follows

1. Explore the correlation between organizational empowerment of staff with perceived organizational support (POS), employee commitment, and organizational trust at the university level.
2. Identify the problems and obstacles in the way of empowerment of staff (academic and non-academic) and suggest remedial measures to address these problems.

Methodology

The population of study is all academic and nonacademic employees of Universities of Sindh except Karachi. The Universities of Sindh provide similar facilities, training and benefits to this category of employees. Additionally the socio-economic conditions of employees are almost the same amongst

the employees of Sindh except Karachi. The findings of present research cannot be applied to the Universities of Karachi since the socio-economic pattern of the Metropolis is entirely different. The sample of the study was drawn from two faculties of University of Sindh, i.e. Faculty of Social Science and Faculty of Commerce & Business Studies. Purposive sampling was used for the survey made and on convenience of the researcher faculty of Commerce and business administration was selected because the academicians of this faculty know about empowerment and one of the researcher herself belong with this faculty. A total of n=250 respondents were selected as sample of study.

Table 1	
Faculty of Commerce, Business Administration & Faculty of Social Sciences	**N**
1.InstituteofBusinessAdministration	20
2. Institute of Commerce	20
3.SindhDevelopment Studies Centre	15
4.Pakistan Studies Centre	15
5. Institute of gender Studies	15
6.Departmentof Economics	15
7.Departmentof General History	15
8.Departmentof International Relations	15
9.Department of Library Information Science& Archive Studies	15
10.DepartmentofMass Communication	15
11.DepartmentofPoliticalScience	15
12.DepartmentofPsychology	15
13.DepartmentofPublicAdministration	15
14.Departmentof Sociology	15
15.Departmentof Social Work	15
16.Departmentof Criminology	15
Total	250

Testing of Hypotheses
Hypothesis I

There is no significant correlation between empowerment and organizational trust in academic and non academic staff of university of Sindh, see Table 2a.

According to the correlation results in Table 2a, a positive relationship exists between Organizational Trust and empowerment ($r = 0.567$, $p ≤ 0.01$). The test statistic reveals that when there is positive relationship between organizational trust and empowerment, satisfaction will follow.

Hypothesis II

There is no significant correlation between empowerment and perceived organizational support in academic and non academic staff of university of Sindh, see table 2b

The second null hypothesis results reveals a positive relationship exists between organizational support and empowerment ($r = 0.527$, $p ≤ 0.01$). The test statistic expose that when there is positive organizational support, empowerment is likely to be high. It can be said that the empowerment of university teaching and non-teaching staff is directly associated with organizational support.

Table 2a

Correlation between empowerment and organizational Trust

		Empowerment	Organizational Trust
Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.567**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	240	240
Organizational Trust	Pearson Correlation	.567**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	240	245

**. Correlation is significant atthe0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 2b

Correlation between empowerment and organizational support

		Organizational Empowerment	Organizational Support
Organizational Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	240	237
Organizational Support	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	000	
	N	237	242

**. Correlation is significantatthe0.01level(1-tailed).

Hypothesis III

There is no significant relationship between employee commitment and empowerment in academic and non academic staff of University of Sindh, see table 2c.

The third null hypothesis of the study stated that there is no relationship between employee commitment and empowerment. According to the correlation results in Table 2c, a positive relationship exists between employee commitment and empowerment (r = 0.591, p ≤ 0.01). The test statistic reveals that when there is positive employee commitment, empowerment is likely to be high.

Table 2c

Correlation between empowerment and employee commitment

		Empowerment	Employee Commitment
Empowerment	Pearson Correlation	1	.591**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	240	238
Employ Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.591**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	238	243

**Correlation issignificantatthe0.01level (1-tailed).

ANOVA

Nature of Job

According to the statistics presented in Table 3-a, there was significant difference between the category of the respondents on nature of job in their ratings of organizational empowerment (p=.003 < 0.05). Professors had the highest mean of3.48 and superintendent had the least mean of 2.65. It may be concluded that employees in different positions are endowed with varying degrees of empowerment which eventually affects their commitment to the organization.

Job experience

According to statistics present in Table 3-b, there was significant difference between the category of the respondents on job experience in their ratings of organizational empowerment (p=.001 < 0.05). Personnel with a job experience of 11 years and more had the highest mean of 3.21 and category with job less than 1 year had less mean (2.41)empowerment. It may be concluded that employees with differ-ent service experience have different organizational empowerment.

Analysis of t-tests

For detailed investigations an independent t-test was carried out on the data received by University of Sindh respondents through SPSS-16 to identify the mean differences between two groups for variables measured on five point Likert scale. See table 4a and 4b.

The difference between two independent variables Male (Mean=2.843, SD= 0.76, N=150) and Female (Mean=3.104, SD= 0.703, N=89) was significantly different t(237) = -2.67, p = 0.0 < .005 The calculated t is 2.61 is greater than the tabulated t (1.660) at an alpha level of , hence it is proved on the basis of statistics that there is significant difference between means of male and female scores of empowerment. See table 4c and 4d.

The difference between two independent variables Male (Mean=3.731, SD= 1.014, N=149) and Female (Mean=3.944, SD= 0.967,

N=93) was significantly different t(240) = -1.63, p = 0.0 < .005.As calculated t is 1.616 is less than the tabulated value of t which is 1.660. This variation indicates that though there is difference in the means but their variation is so less therefore it cannot be counted as significant difference. See table 4e and 4f.

The difference between two independent variables Male (Mean= 2.972, SD= .739, N=152) and Female (Mean=3.245, SD= 0.756, N=93) was significantly different t(243) = -2.763, p = 0.0 < .005.This statics show that calculated value of t is 2.778 is greater than tabulated value of t at alpha level 0.05 which is 1.660. Hence difference is significant. It may be concluded that there are difference of organizational trust on their organization between men and women. See Table 4g and Table 4h.

The difference between two independent variables Administrative (Mean= 2.82, SD= .789, N=81) and Academic (Mean=3.001, SD= 0.731, N=158) was significantly different t(237) = -1.679, p = 0.0 < .005.This statistics show that calculated value of t =1.721 is greater than tabulated value of t at alpha level 0.05 which is 1.660. Hence difference is significant. It may be concluded that there is significant difference in score of Empowerment between academicians and administrative. See Table 4i and Table 4j.

The difference between two independent variables Administrative (Mean= 2.94, SD= .690, N=81) and Academic (Mean=3.139, SD= 0.7809, N=163) was significantly different t(242) = -2.024, p = 0.0 < .005.The t test statics does not indicate significant difference

between academic and administrative staff in their ratings for organizational trust scores. Calculated value is 1.941 and tabulated value at .05 is 1.660. Hence, there is no significant difference between the academic and administrative staff on the rating of organizational trust. See Table 4k and 4l.

The difference between two independent variables Administrative (Mean= 3.033, SD= .712, N=80) and Academic (Mean=3.392, SD= 0.8685, N=162) was significantly different t(240) = -3.200, p = 0.0 < .005

The t test statics indicate significant difference academic and administrative staff in their ratings for employee commitment score. Calculated value is 3.20 and tabulated value at .05 is 1.660. Hence, there was a significant difference between the academic and administrative staff on the rating of employee commitment. See Table 4m.

The difference between two independent variables Administrative (Mean= 3.028, SD= .562, N=81) and Academic (Mean=3.156, SD= 0.756, N=160) was significantly different t(239) = -1.474, p = 0.0 < .005

The t test statics does not indicate significant difference between academic and administrative staff in their ratings for organizational support score. Calculated value is 1.340 and tabulated value at .05 is 1.660. Hence, there was no significant difference between the academic and administrative staff on the rating of employee commitment. This shows that administrative and academic staff have same degree of commitment to their organization, i.e., University of Sindh.

Table 3a

ANOVA on nature of job

Organizational Empowerment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Professor	20	3.4818	.64889	.14510	1.706	3.199	.003
Associate professor	31	3.1194	.59598	.10704	.533		
Assistant professor	40	2.8545	.50587	.07998			
Lecturer	69	2.9091	.87711	.10559			
superintendent	16	2.6477	.74588	.18647			
Assistant	19	2.9617	.69322	.15903			
Clerk	32	2.7528	.77904	.13772			
any other	13	2.6923	.76199	.21134			
Total	240	2.9428	.75343	.04863			

Table 3b

ANOVA on nature of job
Organizational Empowerment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Mean Square	F	Sig.
P1 year or less	17	2.4064	.63402	.15377	2.505	4.668	.001
2 to4 years	42	2.9351	.49480	.07635	.537		
5 to7 years	52	2.8252	.85486	.11855			
8 to10 years	69	2.9302	.72328	.08707			
11 or more	59	3.2157	.79035	.10289			
Total	239	2.9414	.75471	.04882			

Table 4a

Group Statistics for Gender and Organizational Empowerment

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organizational;	male	150	2.8436	.76873	.06277
Empowerment	female	89	3.1042	.70359	.07458

Table 4b

Independent Samples Test for gender and empowerment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.478	.490	-2.61	237	.010	2.60552	9.97093	-4.56981	-6.41218E-2
Equal variances not assumed			-2.67	1.98	.008	2.60552	9.74773	4.52778E-1	6.83253E-2

Table 4c

Group Statistics Organizational Support and Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organizational;	male	149	3.7315	1.01443	.08311
Support	female	93	3.9444	.96788	.10036

Table 4d

Correlation

	SC_T	IN_T	T_T	HT_T	EW_T
Social Capital	1.00				
Int. Influence	0.46	1.00			
Trust	0.55	0.61	1.00		
Homophily	0.47	0.48	0.58	1.00	
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.63	0.54	0.70	0.71	1.00

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (i-tailed)

Table 4e

Independent Samples Test Organizational Support and gender

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.124	.725	-1.616	240	.107	-.21286	.13173	-.47237	.04664
Equal variances not assumed			-1.634	202.2	.104	-.21286	.13031	-.46980	.04407

Table 4f

Group Statistics Gender and Organizational Trust

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organizational;	male	152	2.9724	.73900	.05994
Trust	female	93	3.2452	.75678	.07847

Table 4g

Independent Samples Test Gender and Organizational Trust

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.021	.313	-2.778	243	.006	-.27279	.09818	-.46619	-7.93966E-2
Equal variances not assumed			2.763	1.91	.006	-.27279	.09875	-.46757	-7.80164E-2

Table 4h

Group Statistics Academic & Administrative staff and Empowerment

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organizational;	Administrative	81	2.8249	.78963	.08774
Empowerment	Academic	158	3.0017	.73171	.05821

Table 4i

Independent Samples Test Academic and administrative and empowerment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Organizational	.212	.646	-1.721E02.E2		.087	-1.76810E-1	.10273	-.37919	2.55742E-2
Empowerment			-1.679E01.510E2.095			-1.76810E-1	.10529	-.38484	3.12235E-2

Table 4h

Group Statistics Academic and administrative and organizational trust

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organizational;	Administrative	81	2.9407	.69025	.07669
Empowerment	Academic	163	3.1393	.78098	.06117

Table 4k

Independent Samples Test Academic and administrative and organizational trust

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.538	.216	-1.941	242	.053	-.19852	.10226	-.39995	.00290
Equal variances not assumed			-2.024178.490.044			-.19852	.09810	-.39211	-.00493

Table 4l

Independent Samples Test Administrative/Academic and Organizational Support

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.94	0.165	-1.340	239	0.181	-1.274	0.0951	-0.3148	0.599
Equal variances not assumed			-1.474	206	0.142	-1.274	0.0864	-2.979	0.430

Table 4m

Independent Samples Test Administrative/Academic and Employee Commitment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.346	.557	3.200	240	.002	.35884	.11213	.57972	.13797
Equal variances not assumed			3.420	187.7	.001	.35884	.10492	.56581	.15187

Discussions

The findings indicate that organizational trust and empowerment has a direct relationship. These findings confirm the previous work by Chan et al. (2008), and Faulkner and Laschinger (2008) that trust is important for individuals to experience empowerment at work. Employees experience more empowerment when they perceive that their leaders perceive them as trustworthy (Spreitzer, 2007). Supportive climate is characterized by high levels of trust (Anderson & West, 1998; Mathisen & Einarsen, 2004). Organizational trust, thus, is likely to enhance employees' feelings of support to practice innovation.

Empowerment has significant and positive direct effects on organizational commitment (Cho et al., 2006; Smith, Andrusyszyn

& Laschinger, 2010). Having the opportunity to build strong relationships with peers, access information and resources increases the academic staff's commitment to the university and their departments.

According to Ahmad, et al. (2010), the general point of employees is that they feel psychologically more empowered at their workplace when they have organizational support. Employees with perceived organizational support are more certain and positive that they have all the resources required to perform their job efficiently, appreciation for their efforts and organizational association for their actions. According to Patrick and Laschinger (2006), perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment are positively related with each other.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to correlate empowerment, perceived organizational support, employee commitment and organizational support. According to statistical findings of the study, empowerment was witnessed in the university academic and nonacademic staff. There were positive correlations between organizational empowerment, perceived organizational support and employee commitment. Some of the other findings of the study were, female employees were more empowered than male employees and professors were more empowered than other academicians or non-academicians. The employees who were senior with more than ten years of job experience in the University had more empowerment than those who had less teaching experience. The employees who were highly educated

were also highly empowered.

Recommendations

1. Employee commitment has a direct relationship with empowerment, therefore University policy makers should initiate measures to increase their commitment with the university., they should be given more fringe benefits and job security that commitment of staff in general and commitment in nonacademic staff should be increased particularly.

2. Organizational support has direct relationship with the organizational empowerment. Employees of those organizations are highly motivated and empowered who are well supported by their organizations. In the present study it was found that lower cadre employees score is less in organizational support. University should start programs at once to support their employees. Some examples can be the education of their children, insurance of their families and jobs to their children.

3. There is also a direct relationship between organizational trust and empowerment. Therefore University policymakers should take steps to increase the empowerment of its employee's through increasing their trust in the organization.

4. Employees empowerment is important issue in large organizations like Universities, therefore those organizations should pay more attention to increase the empowerment of their employees.

5. University organization should launch an effective communication program as an element that enhances performance.

6. The organizational resources may be re-

allocated among employees equally that all employees feel contented and an unbiased and balanced empowerment may be created.

7. Special welfare programs should commence for lower cadre employees to increase their empowerment.

8. Some of the frustration and disappointment which cause frustration and disappointment may be eliminated. Some of these frustration factors are absenteeism, illness, defiance and poor mental health. These can be eradicated by building team spirit and esprit de corps.

9. Workshops may be scheduled for lower cadre employees where they are intimated that their messages and problems are from time to time conveyed to the management.

10. There is a need to create and restructure empowerment friendly environment in the university of Sindh.

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