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ROLE OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT IN BOOSTING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS OF PAKISTAN

The aim of this paper is to study the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment in the context of public sector organizations of Pakistan. Using the tools of employee empowerment (Matthews, Diaz and Cole, 2003) and organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997), the sample of 114 employees was collected from Auditor General of Pakistan and Federal Board of Revenue. Data were treated to different descriptive, bivariate and regression analyses in SPSS 17 statistical package. The conclusion drawn from the results indicated that employee empowerment and organizational commitment are correlated but do not have any strong relationship.

Keywords: public sector; organizational commitment; employee empowerment; hierarchal system.

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РОЛЬ РОЗШИРЕННЯ ПОВНОВАЖЕНЬ ПЕРСОНАЛУ У ПІДВИЩЕННІ ЙОГО ЛОЯЛЬНОСТІ: ЗА ДАНИМИ ДЕРЖАВНОГО СЕКТОРУ ПАКИСТАНУ

У статті досліджено взаємозв'язок між наданням персоналу ширших повноважень та його лояльністю до місця роботи на прикладі організацій державного сектору Пакистану. Вибірка дослідження – 114 співробітників офісу Генерального Аудитора Пакистану та Федеральної ради з оподаткування. Дані опитування було проаналізовано трьома методами матаналізу в межах пакету SPSS 17. Результати аналізу виявили, що розширення повноважень та лояльність персоналу взаємопов'язані, однак дану кореляцію не можна назвати стійкою або довготривалою.

Ключові слова: державний сектор; лояльність до організації; розширення повноважень персоналу; ієрархічна система.

Рис. 1. Табл. 8. Літ. 32.

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РОЛЬ РАСШИРЕНИЯ ПОЛНОМОЧИЙ ПЕРСОНАЛА В ПОВЫШЕНИИ ЕГО ЛОЯЛЬНОСТИ: ПО ДАННЫМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО СЕКТОРА ПАКИСТАНА

В статье исследована взаимосвязь между предоставлением персоналу более широких полномочий и лояльностью к месту работы на примере организаций государственного сектора Пакистана. Выборка исследования – 114 сотрудников офиса Генерального Аудитора Пакистана и Федерального совета по налогообложению. Данные опроса были проанализированы тремя методами математического анализа в рамках пакета SPSS 17. Результаты анализа показали, что расширение полномочий и лояльность персонала взаимосвязаны, однако данную корреляцию нельзя назвать устойчивой и долгосрочной.

Ключевые слова: государственный сектор; лояльность к организации; расширение полномочий персонала; иерархическая система.

Introduction. Globalization has resulted in highly competitive business world. Companies are finding different ways to gain competitive advantage. Employees are

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considered the most valuable assets of any company. Managers using the right ways and techniques could get the maximum out of them. Employee empowerment is an effective management practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions at the right time. This management practice has gained popularity due to its multiple positive outcomes.

Research shows that one of the most important consequences of employee empowerment is organizational commitment. Committed employees would work hard to accomplish their goals and objectives. Commitment also results in high performance of an individual, hence an effective contribution in the overall performance of an organization. Commitment is also said to affect employee's satisfaction. A satisfied employee would make his job meaningful and would go to the extent of completing it by any means.

Most of public sector organizations in Pakistan have rigid hierarchal systems where the right to decision-making stays with higher authorities. Asian culture is of high power on distance, which is also one of the reasons for low employee empowerment in public sector organisations. Researchers studying the relationship of empowerment and commitment in Asian cultural context in recent years did not find any significant link between the two variables. Employee empowerment could be a beneficial and advantageous tool to boost employees' commitment working in public sector.

Due to rigid control and command system in most of public sector organizations of Pakistan and also due to high power culture, can employee empowerment be the key to enhance individual commitment?

Employee empowerment tends to be an interesting topic in the context of developing countries. Uncommitted employees can be a big problem for organizations, as they might show low performance, irresponsible behaviour and switch jobs which may lead to increased cost of hiring new employees. If individuals are armed with empowerment, they will show more interest in attaining the goals and objectives of their company. Employees will own their work and they will take necessary measures to achieve their assigned tasks.

Consistent results are shown by Western researchers that empowerment has a significant impact on commitment, while, inconsistent findings in Asian countries do not seem to fit in. Therefore, the relationship between empowerment and commitment needs to be further tested in the context of developing Asian countries, so that sufficient evidence and body of knowledge could be generated to get more definite results.

The objective of this research is to study the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment in public sector organizational settings in a developing Asian country, Pakistan. The basic aim of this research is to test the correlation of subdimensions of employee empowerment: dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decision and fluidity in information sharing with organizational commitment.

Literature review.

1. Employee empowerment. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) define empowerment as a form of intrinsic task motivation exhibited in 4 cognitive dimensions: meaningfulness, competence, choice and impact, and Spreitzer (1995) developed a scale to

measure the psychological empowerment in these 4 dimensions. Bogler and Somech (2004) recognized 6 dimensions of empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact.

Randolph (1995) suggests that employee empowerment is a "transfer of power" from employer to employee. However, power transfer process should be carried out with due diligence and empowered employees should be held accountable for their actions (Ongori, 2009). Singh and Bhandarker (1990) recognize that one of the basic traits of a good leader include empowering employees. Diwedi (2000) study showed that perceived empowerment in different organizations in India and Philippines was at moderate level. According to Mills and Ungson (2003), control loss is one of the reasons for employees' incompetence to understand what they need to do to achieve targets. Research suggests that wider scope of empowerment encompasses improved health outcomes and poverty reduction (Wallerstein, 2006).

"Cognitive model" of empowerment defines empowerment broader, with components: choice, providing employee with genuine job enrichment and opportunities to have their voice heard, having real power for control and influence over work processes, which makes employees confident in discharging their duties. This model stresses that it is a must for organisations to empower their employees to gain competitive advantage (Ongori, 2009). Employees work more effectively when they have organizational support and as a consequence organizational output increases. Hence performance improves at all levels (Manajlovich, 2007).

Matthews, Diaz and Cole (2003) developed a tool for corporate use in determination of employee empowerment. The organizational empowerment scale measures empowerment in an organization within 3 specific dimensions of dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decision and fluidity in information sharing. These dimensions are defined as follows:

- Dynamic structural framework occurs when a company provides a clear set of modifiable guidelines that assists employee decision-making both procedurally and behaviourally in an evolving work environment.
- Control of workplace decision occurs when employees are allowed input into all aspects of their professional career.
- Fluidity in information sharing occurs when all information concerning the company is accessible to all individuals in it (Matthews et al., 2003)

The scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) allowed researchers measure the concept of empowerment only on the basis of workplace environment perception. The reason for using the Matthews et al. (2003) scale for this study is that it not only measures the perception of empowerment but also action information could be gathered through it.

2. Employee commitment. Commitment is one of the most researched topics as it affects individual performance and overall performance of an organization. Organizational commitment has been studied in the context of different cultures and the results show that the meaning and predictors of commitment vary due to cultural differences (Bae & Chung, 1997). Commitment is claimed to affect job performance and turnover (Gregson, 1992). Organizational commitment also contributes to national productivity of a country and affects the society as a whole (Porter et al., 1974).

To achieve organizational goals and objectives, workforce need to be dedicated, involved and committed to organization (Locke and Latham, 1990). Committed individuals are likely to be very devoted, perform high-quality task and spend extra time on solving important issues (Kuo, Ho, Lin and Lai, 2009). According to Sahoo, Behera and Tripathy (2010) employee commitment could result in good performance, low absenteeism, high productivity and organization's better image and market share.

Organisational commitment is defined as the emotional and psychological attachment of an employee to his/her organization (Morrow, 1993). Individuals committed to organisation exercise extra efforts; protect company assets and share company's goals and values (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Employees having emotional attachment to their organization desire to contribute meaningfully (Sahoo et al., 2010) and hence put more effort on their part to achieve goals. Employee's perception that the job is meaningful and that the employee can use some autonomy leads to higher level of organizational commitment (Jha, 2011). Organizational commitment can also be defined as the identification of goals and values, without having any material concerns and the main concern is to remain with the organization (Gaertner and Nollen, 1989).

According to Meyer and Allen (1991) there are 3 components of organizational commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. These are defined as follows:

- Affective commitment: denotes the sense of belonging and emotional attachment to organization.
- Continuance commitment: emphasizes the perceived costs of leaving organization.
- Normative commitment: reflects the perceived obligation to remain in organization.

For this research the 18-item scale to measure affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment is used.

Theoretical framework. Relationship of employee empowerment and commitment has been studied thoroughly in the past two decades. Arthur (1994) indicated that the empowering strategy aimed at increasing commitment results in higher productivity, less waste and lower employee turnover. The findings of Cavus and Demir (2010) show that when hospital organizational structure supports empowerment, they form compatibility between nurses' expectations of work life quality and organizational goals and processes. Employee empowerment significantly enhances job involvement, job satisfaction; career satisfaction and organizational commitment (Noorliza and Hasni, 2006). Out of 6 dimensions identified by Bogler and Somech (2004) professional growth, status and self-efficacy are found to be significant predictors of organisational and professional commitment. Joo and Shim (2010) found psychological empowerment as a predictor of organizational commitment.

Recent studies conducted in Asian countries showed inconsistent results. Researchers were not able to establish a strong relationship between employee empowerment and commitment. Bhatnagar (2007) found that empowerment was not strongly related to organizational commitment in India and Chen and Chen (2008) study found that some of empowerment subdimensions were positively correlated to organizational commitment, but others were negatively or not correlated to organi-

zational commitment in Taiwan. Jha (2011) found that in Indian IT industry, psychological empowerment have a positive influence on affective and normative commitment and have a negative influence on continuance commitment. Karim and Rehman (2012) for a semi-government organization of Pakistan suggests that empowerment provided to employees, increases organizational commitment but it cannot pose any significant impact.

In the light of the above literature review, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H₁: Employee empowerment is positively and significantly related to organizational commitment.
- H₂: Dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decision and fluidity in information sharing are positively related to organizational commitment.

Research model. Theoretical model for this study is given in Figure 1.

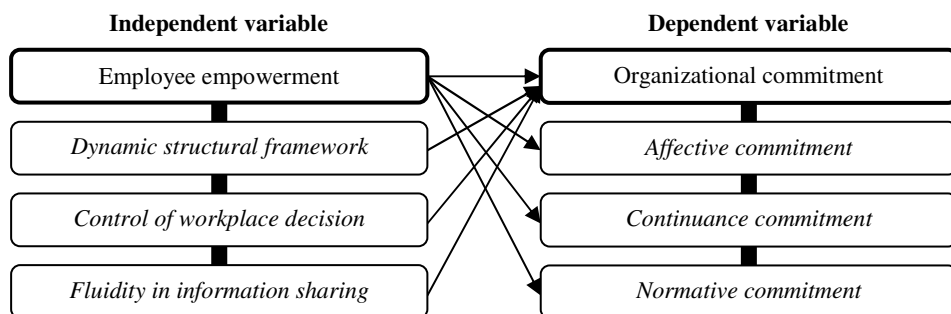


Figure 1. **Research model, authors'**

Methodology.

1. Research design. This study is limited in its scope as it is particularly focused on public sector only. Questionnaire survey was used to collect data from the Auditor General of Pakistan and Federal Board of Revenue. The total number questionnaires distributed were 150. 114 responses were received, thus showing response rate of 76%.

2. Tools used. To measure employee empowerment, the scale developed by Matthews, Diaz and Cole (2003) was used. The OES is a 19-item scale with both positively and negatively phrased statements that measure empowerment in an organization within 3 specific dimensions of dynamic structural framework, control of workplace decision, and fluidity of information sharing. Validity and reliability have been tested further.

For measuring organizational commitment, the questionnaire by Meyer and Allen (1997) has been used. It is 18-item based questionnaire intended to measure 3 dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, normative and continuance.

The questionnaire used for data collection consisted of 3 portions. The first part comprised personal data of the respondents. The second and the third parts included all the questions formulated to measure organizational commitment and employee empowerment. The respondents gave their responses to all the items on the 1–5 Likert scale ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree". The instrument was tested for reliability. The Cronbach alpha value was 0.735. The reliability of 0.7 or more is considered to be acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).

Data analysis and findings. The data collected through questionnaires was analysed using SPSS 13 package. Descriptive, bivariate analysis and linear regression were tested on the data and the results were generated as follows.

Table 1 comprises the personal data given by the respondents. There were more male respondents (79.8%), as compared to the female ones (20.2%). The reason for such a low percentage of female respondents is that there are in general not female employees working in the public sector of Pakistan. The highest frequency of respondents falls in the age group of 26–30, whereas the lowest frequency of respondents falls in the age group of 20–25.

Table 1. Personal Data of Respondents, authors'

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	91	79.8
Female	23	20.2
Total	114	100
Age		
20–25	6	5.3
26–30	27	23.7
30–35	26	22.8
36–40	21	18.4
40–46	14	12.3
46 and above	20	17.5

Table 2 shows the measures of central tendencies. According to the results of descriptive statistics, the data on organizational commitment is not normally distributed as the mean and median values are not same. The distribution of employee empowerment data is close to normality as there is not much difference between its mean and median values. Standard deviation indicates how far the responses of individual respondents deviate from the mean value. Organizational commitment is negatively skewed which means most responses are concentrated on the right of the mean, with extreme values to the left. Employee empowerment is right skewed distribution. The values of kurtosis are less than 3 in both variables groups. This implies that both are Platykurtic distributions which means that the probability for extreme values is less than for a normal distribution and the large proportion of data are gathered around the mean.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, authors'

		Commitment	Empowerment
N	Valid	114	114
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3.0272	2.9481
Median		3.0400	2.9400
Std. Deviation		.24929	.27169
Skewness		-.456	.392
Std. Error of Skewness		.225	.225
Kurtosis		.635	.477
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.446	.446
Minimum		2.37	2.30
Maximum		3.66	3.69

Table 3 demonstrated the Pearson correlation between the three components of employee empowerment and organizational commitment. According to the findings the highest positive correlation exists between Dynamic structural framework and organizational commitment that is 0.76 which is significant at the 0.01 level of significance. Fluidity in information sharing and control of workplace decision are positively correlated with organizational commitment having 0.622 and 0.631 values being significant at the 0.01 level of significance, respectively.

Table 3. Correlations, authors'

		Fluidity in information sharing	Control of workplace decision	Dynamic structural framework	Organizational commitment
Fluidity in information sharing	Pearson correlation	1	.663**	.584**	.622**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Control of workplace decision	Pearson correlation	.663**	1	.614**	.631**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Dynamic structural framework	Pearson correlation	.584**	.614**	1	.760**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Organizational commitment	Pearson correlation	.622**	.631**	.760**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	114	114	114	114

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 4 tests the Pearson correlation between the 3 components of organizational commitment and employee empowerment. Affective commitment tends to be highly correlated with organizational empowerment among all 3 components, having 0.656 correlation at the 0.01 level of significance (one-tailed). Continuance and normative commitment are positively correlated with organizational empowerment, scoring 0.588 and 0.598 correlations at the 0.01 level of significance (one-tailed), respectively.

Table 4. Correlations, authors'

		Employee empowerment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment	Affective commitment
Employee empowerment	Pearson correlation	1	.588**	.598**	.656**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Continuance commitment	Pearson correlation	.588**	1	.237**	.612**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.005	.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Normative commitment	Pearson correlation	.598**	.237**	1	.518**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.005		.000
	N	114	114	114	114
Affective commitment	Pearson correlation	.656**	.612**	.518**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	114	114	114	114

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The model analysis consists of one independent variable (employee empowerment). Table 5 suggests that the R² value is 57.2% which explains the variation in dependent variable (organizational commitment) is due to variation in independent variable (employee empowerment). Adjusted R-square shows that 56.9% of variance in organizational commitment was explained by variation in the employee empowerment. In ANOVA (Table 6), since the p-value of F-statistics is 0.00% < 5%, we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between empowerment and commitment. The model is statistically significant. Employee empowerment explains variation in organizational commitment.

Table 5. Model summary, authors'

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.757 ^a	.572	.569	.21830

^a Predictors: (constant), employee empowerment.

Table 6. ANOVA^b, authors'

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.146	1	7.146	149.951	.000 ^a
Residual	5.337	112	.048		
Total	12.483	113			

^a Predictors: (constant), employee empowerment.

^b Dependent variable: organizational commitment.

T-test statistics (Table 7) shows that employee empowerment has significant relationship with organizational commitment (p-value 0.00 < 0.05). The value of beta signifies that one unit change in employee empowerment will result in .71 unit change in organizational commitment. Table 8 shows that out of all 3 dimensions of employee empowerment, the influence of control of workplace decision on organizational commitment is the lowest (standardized beta is 0.170) as compared to other two dimensions. Dynamic structural framework has the most influence on organizational commitment (its standardized beta being 0.543). All 3 dimensions of employee empowerment are statistically significant, as their p-value of t-statistics is less than 0.05.

Table 7. Coefficients^a, authors'

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	.934	.175		5.342	.000
Employee empowerment	.713	.058	.757	12.245	.000

^a Dependent variable: organizational commitment.

Table 8. Coefficients^a, authors'

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	.414	.201		2.062	.042
Dynamic structural framework	.618	.087	.543	7.138	.000
Control of workplace decision	.137	.067	.170	2.059	.042
Fluidity in information sharing	.125	.052	.193	2.410	.018

^a Dependent variable: organizational commitment.

Discussion and conclusion. As we see in literature, the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment is not definite. Robert et al. (2000) suggests that in high power distance cultures, empowerment does not have much effect on employees performance. Pang et al. (1998) argue that Western concepts, one being empowerment inter alia, may not be of much use in Chinese culture. Pakistan is also one of high power distance cultures where the empowerment concept is not clearly understood and accepted, specially within public sector. The results of this research suggest there exists a positive and statistically significant relationship between empowerment and commitment (Table 7), so we can accept H_1 but the overall model is not perceived to show a strong relationship (Table 4). In public sector organizations people are more comfortable working according to standardized sets and criteria, rules and regulations. Empowering employees means delegating them more responsibility as they will be accountable for their decisions. One of the reasons for weak relationship could be that responsibility is considered as a burden rather than an opportunity to grow. There is certain reluctance to accept empowerment for the fear of accountability. The study on Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan also showed that employee empowerment was positively correlated to organizational commitment but it could not have any significant effect on it (Karim and Rehman, 2012).

Looking at individual facets of employee empowerment, all 3 dimensions are positively correlated with organizational commitment (Table 8) which leads us to the acceptance of H_2 . Dynamic structural framework has relatively higher impact on organizational commitment as its standardized slope coefficient is 0.543 (Table 8). Standard guidelines are provided to employees to assist them in carrying out their work activities and decision-making. The results clearly show that employees cannot have their say in important decisions. Kamal and Hanif (2009) stated in their study that most of Pakistani banks do not see employee participation as an antecedent of organizational commitment. Also they do not have access to all the information relevant to operations and decisions of the company. This also raises a question on the type of culture currently prevalent in public sector organizations. Culture does not support the concept of empowerment. Even if employees are empowered to some extent, there are hurdles caused by the culture in an organization, due to which employees cannot exercise their empowerment.

Recommendations. Employee empowerment as an antecedent of organizational commitment should be further studied in the context of high power cultures. For future directions same research could be carried out in private sector of Pakistan. Also large sample size could be considered to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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