



Employee empowerment: Exploring the relationship with organisational support and employee commitment

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Abstract

The present study is carried out to explore the relation between employee empowerment and perceived organisational support; relation between employee empowerment and employee commitment. The population of study was all academic and non-academic employees of Universities of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Structured questionnaire has been employed to obtain information from respondents under study of institutions of higher learning. The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through Overall Cronbach Alpha. The tool was administered on 350 academic and non-academic subjects out of whom 283 were found to be fit for analysis. The results revealed a positive relationship between employee empowerment and organisational support and also between employee empowerment and employee commitment. Gender and Experience was also found to have an impact on employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment.

Keywords: employee empowerment, organisational support, employee commitment, administrative staff, academic staff, education

Introduction

Employee empowerment has long been associated with organisational outcomes such as innovation, greater effectiveness, and better performance. Employees in higher education are responsible for the important day-to-day operations of a university; therefore, organisational strategies such as employee empowerment that encourage initiatives and innovative behaviours among them may become crucial to the long-term survival of today's colleges and universities. Kanter (1977) ^[24] believes that employee empowerment is directly connected with the outcomes of organisations like effectiveness, innovation and better performance. Chan *et al.* (2008) ^[8] add that positive work behaviour of empowered staff is also directly related with perceived organisational support, employee commitment and organisational trust. According to Gill (2011) ^[19], employee empowerment refers to the meaningful job of employees, their feelings of competence, autonomy, and contribution to the decision making or applications of leadership. The employee empowerment concept actually certifies the employees with necessary power to employ plan and judgment in their work, participate in their work related decision-making, and authorizes them to respond quickly to the needs and concerns of the customers (Durai, 2010) ^[13].

Unfortunately, no Indian University is figuring in the list of top 100 Universities of the World. In this study an effort has been made to provide an insight that how the quality of Indian Universities can be improved with the help of employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment. This paper also explores differences in the nature of empowerment, organizational support, and employee commitment across gender and experience.

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment?

RQ2: What is the perception of administrative and academic staff regarding variables under study?

RQ3: What is the impact of various demographic factors of respondents on their perception regarding employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment?

Review of literature

Employee Empowerment

Brown and Harvey (2006) ^[7] define employee empowerment as a process of giving staffs or employees the authority or power to make decisions about their own job. Blanchard *et al.* (1997) ^[3] argues that empowerment refers not only to have power or authority to make decision and act, but also to have higher level of responsibility and accountability. Demirci and Erbas (2010) ^[9, 10] calls employee empowerment a unique style of management where managers confer about various work related issues and activities with the employees of the organisation. Randolph (1995) ^[30] perhaps offers the simplest definition of employee empowerment, and views employee empowerment as a process of transferring power from the employer to the employees. This transformation of power benefits organisations in many forms. According to Gronroos (2001) ^[20], employee empowerment ensures more direct and quicker response to customer requirements, assists in service recovery and makes the employees satisfied. Researchers explain employee empowerment from different viewpoint.

Ghosh (2013) ^[18] argues employee empowerment emerges from four different perspectives: social, psychological, growth and organisational. Kahreh *et al.* (2011) ^[23] describes employee empowerment from psychological and employment climate perspectives. Bekker and Crous (1998) ^[2] state three perspectives of employee empowerment namely organisational, individual, and training and development. According to Lee and Koh (2001) ^[26], and Zeglat *et al.* (2014) ^[38], psychological and structural/ relational empowerments are the most common forms of employee empowerment. Scott and Jaffe (1992) ^[32] claim individual perspective (subjective dimension) of empowerment should be emphasized, in which the aspects include motivation, commitment, locus of control and authority. Demirci and Erbas (2010) ^[9, 10] reason that empowerment is formulated by the combination of four components: power, information, knowledge and rewards. Power refers to the ability of getting things completed (Kanter 1993) ^[25]. Power is concerned with the autonomy, delegation and authority given to the employees. Information encompasses the employees' access to the data related to the organisational objectives and strategy, and active engagement in the process of decision-making (Vacharakiat, 2008) ^[34]. Information also includes clarification of individual role and feedback obtained from manager, subordinates and peers. Sharing of knowledge is a group process where employees share relevant information, knowledge and ideas regarding their work (Yasothisai *et al.*, 2015) ^[37]. Reward indicates the monetary or non-monetary benefits that an employee receives, which is considered an effective tool to increase employee motivation (Yasothisai *et al.*, 2015) ^[37].

Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Organisational Support Theory (OST) proposes that when the organisation is ready to care and meet employees' socio-emotional needs, they develop the belief of perceived organisational support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) ^[14]. POS is defined as "a global beliefs about the extent to which the organisation cares about their wellbeing and values their contributions" (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986) ^[14]. As Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) ^[14] noted, "to test the globality of the employee's beliefs concerning support by the organisation, we constructed 36 statements representing various possible evaluative judgments of the employee". POS indicates supervisory support, wide varieties of rewards and working conditions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) ^[31], developmental opportunities to expand their skills (Wayne *et al.*, 1997) ^[36], autonomy in which they are received to carry out the job (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1999) ^[15] and recognition from the top management (Wayne *et al.*, 2002) ^[35]. Hence, POS is diverse in its nature and it recognizes both economic and social exchanges between employee and the organisation.

Employee Commitment

According to Bratton and Gold (2007) ^[5] employee commitment is relative to the workers' attachment to or participation in the organisations in which they are employed. Employee commitment is significant since it determines whether employees are likely to leave their jobs or improve performance. Numerous studies have related to employee commitment. Mowday *et al.* (1979) ^[28] emphasized concepts

they referred to as attitudinal commitment and behavioural commitment. Another concept introduced by Meyer and Allen (1991) ^[27] is the most recognized among employee commitment theories. In this approach, employee commitment has three multi-dimensional components namely: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment, which relates to emotional attachment, is normally linked to a favorable working environment and relationships with the other employees. Normative commitment, on the other hand, is related to obligation: employees may feel they owe the organisation for being given a job when they need it most. Finally, continuance commitment relates to such terms of employment as job contracts, which may make leaving the current job very costly or troublesome (Mullins, 2001) ^[29]. Work performance and turnover owing to organisational environment have become a major headache to many heads of organisations in general, and human resource managers in particular (Freund & Carmeli, 2003) ^[16]. This problem is mostly attributable to lack of stability and job security for employees, who constitute one of the most important resources in the organisation. Many organisations have begun to foster workers' commitment to their work/occupation/career; to the organisation, its values, and ambitions; and to a strong job ethic.

Employee commitment is considered to be psychological immersion of an individual with his institute through sense of belonging, ownership of organisational goals and being ready to accept challenges (Dolan *et al.*, 2005) ^[11]. Creating commitment among employees is important because without this it will become difficult for an organisation to achieve strategic goals. (Brisco & Claus, 2008; Fugate *et al.*, 2009) ^[6, 17]. Organisational commitment means the involvement of an employee to perform his work with zeal and excitement (Dorenbosch & Veldhoven, 2006) ^[12]. Performance of an organisation is directly related to commitment level of employees (Ivancevich, 2010) ^[22]. Committed employees will be able to perform their jobs more than management expectations (Bragg, 2002) ^[4].

Objectives of the study

1. To study the relationship between employee empowerment with perceived organisational support.
2. To study the relationship between employee empowerment with employee commitment.
3. To make staff wise comparison in relationship to referred variables.
4. To study the impact of demographic factors on employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment.
5. To provide suggestions as to how employee empowerment, organisational support, employee commitment can be improved on the basis of results.

Hypotheses

- H₁:** There is significant relationship between employee empowerment and perceived organisational Support.
- H₂:** There is significant relationship between employee empowerment and perceived employee commitment.

Research Methodology

The population of study is all academic and nonacademic employees of Universities of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Structured questionnaire has been employed to obtain information from respondents under study of institutions of higher learning. The data for the study was collected both through the primary and secondary sources. The measuring items used for the study were sourced from existing validated scales and literature. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through Overall Cronbach Alpha. The overall “Cronbach Alpha” calculated through SPSS is 0.821 which is much higher than the acceptable level in social science research (Hair *et al.*, 1998) [21]. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section ‘A’ included demographic information of respondents while Section ‘B’ included statements of empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment. The demographic characteristics were gender and experience.

The sample of the study was drawn from two faculties of J&K Universities, i.e. Faculty/School of Social Science and Faculty/School of Commerce & Business Studies. Purposive sampling was used for the survey made and on convenience of the researcher faculty/School of Commerce and business administration was selected because the academicians of this faculty know about empowerment, organisational support, employee commitment and the researcher himself belonged to this faculty. A total of n=350 respondents were selected as sample of study out of which 283 were found to be fit for analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

Sample Characteristics of the Respondents

Descriptive statistics was employed to know the descriptive information across various demographic variables on a total sample of 283. The various demographic variables which were considered for the study were gender and experience. The analysis of the sample revealed the characteristics as indicated in the table 1.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Overall		
	Particulars	Frequency	%age
Gender	Male	163	57.59
	Female	120	42.41
Experience	Less than 10 years	130	45.94
	10-20 years	95	33.56
	20 years and above	58	20.50

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Hypotheses Testing

The results reveal a positive relationship exists between organisational support and empowerment ($r = 0.348, p \leq 0.01$) (table 2). The test statistic expose that when there is positive organisational 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 organisational support. Hence H_1 is supported.

Table 2: Correlation between Employee Empowerment and Organisational Trust

VARIABLES	Employee Empowerment	Organisational Trust
Employee Empowerment	1	.348**
Organisational Trust	.348**	1

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to the correlation results in table 3, a positive relationship exists between employee commitment and empowerment ($r = 0.468, p \leq 0.01$). The test statistic reveals that when there is positive employee commitment, empowerment is likely to be high. Hence H_2 is supported.

Table 3: Correlation between Employee Empowerment and Employee Commitment

Variables	Employee Empowerment	Employee Commitment
Employee Empowerment	1	.468**
Employee Commitment	.468**	1

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Perceptual Gap

The differences in the perception of respondents related to the variables that have been examined in this study are considered quite relevant irrespective of their statistical significance. Thus, the following section inspects the differences in perceptions of respondents about the variables under study.

The table 4 shows a comparison of male and female group of respondents. Z-test was used because it compares empowerment, organisational support, employee between the male and female respondents. It becomes clear from the table 4 that the overall mean scores of male respondents was high as compared to female respondents in all the variables under study. Overall, the mean score observed from variable empowerment as a whole is 3.83, 3.68 for organizational support, 3.44 for employee commitment which is more than the average level.

Further, Z-test was utilized to ascertain whether the difference in the mean scores of the respondent male and the female respondents of the sample universities with respect to their perception about empowerment, organisational support, and employee commitment is statistically significant or merely an outcome of a random variation. The results indicate that the perceptual differences of respondents are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender as the p value is less than .05 in every variable, thereby indicating gender has an impact on how the respondents perceive about empowerment, organisational support and commitment.

Table 4: Empowerment, Organisational support, Employee Commitment and Gender

Group Statistics (N=283); Male=163, Female=120						
Variables	Gender	Mean**	Overall Mean score	Std. Deviation	Z-value	Sig.*
Empowerment	Male	3.89	3.83	.636	1.675	.007
	Female	3.78		.734		
Organisational Support	Male	3.77	3.68	.723	1.710	.034
	Female	3.60		.752		
Employee Commitment	Male	3.48	3.44	.675	2.009	.047
	Female	3.40		.709		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05

From a comparative stand point, empowerment in administrative staff appears to be better (mean score = 3.86; percentage of mean score = 77.2) than the academic staff (mean score = 3.80; percentage of mean score = 76.0) (table 5). However, z test was employed to examine whether the differences between the administrative and academic staff are statistically significant or not. The results revealed that the difference is merely an outcome of chance factor and not statistically significant (z-value = -1.254; p value = 0.374).

Table 5: A comparison between administrative and academic staff on the basis of empowerment

	Mean Score	Percentage of Mean Score	Z - Value	Sig.*
Administrative staff	3.86	77.2	-1.254	0.374 ^{ns}
Academic Staff	3.80	76.0		
Overall	3.83	76.6		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05; ns = not significant

Also organisational support in administrative staff appears to be better (mean score = 3.76; percentage of mean score = 75.2) than the academic staff (mean score = 3.60; percentage of mean score = 72.0) (table 6). However, z test was employed to examine whether the differences between the administrative and academic staff are statistically significant or not. The results revealed that the difference is merely an outcome of chance factor and not statistically significant (z-value = -2.384; p value = 0.487).

Table 6: A comparison between administrative and academic staff on the basis of organisational support

	Mean Score	Percentage of Mean Score	Z - Value	Sig.*
Administrative staff	3.76	75.2	-2.384	0.487 ^{ns}
Academic Staff	3.60	72.0		
Overall	3.68	76.6		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05; ns = not significant

From a comparative stand point, employee commitment in administrative staff appears to be better (mean score = 3.69; percentage of mean score = 73.8) than the academic staff (mean score = 3.19; percentage of mean score = 63.8) (table 7). The results revealed that the difference across two groups is merely an outcome of chance factor and not statistically significant (z-value = -4.741; p value = 0.739).

Table 7: A comparison between administrative and academic staff on the basis of employee commitment

	Mean Score	Percentage of Mean Score	Z - Value	Sig.*
Administrative staff	3.69	73.8	-4.741	0.739 ^{ns}
Academic Staff	3.19	63.8		
Overall	3.44	68.8		

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: *p<.05; ns = not significant

The table 8 shows a comparison between the mean scores of respondents on the basis of experience. For empowerment, the highest mean score was for respondents having experience of less than 10 years (3.88) and lowest for respondents having experience of 20 years and above (3.80), for organisational support highest mean score was for respondents having experience of less than 10 years (3.88) and lowest for respondents having experience of 10-20 years (3.32), for employee commitment highest mean score was also for respondents having experience of less than 10 years (3.64) and lowest for respondents having experience of 20 years and above (3.10). In order to analyze the perception of respondents towards the variables across different experience groups, one-way ANOVA was used. The calculated results revealed that there is significant difference in the perception of faculty members across different experience groups towards the variables under study as p value is less than .05 in all the variables. Thereby indicating experience has an impact on empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment.

Table 8: Empowerment, Organisational support, Employee Commitment and Experience

Variables	Factor	Group	Mean score	Overall Mean score	F-value	Sig.
Empowerment	Experience	Less than 10 years	3.88	3.83	4.598	.020*
		10-20 years	3.81			
		20 years & above	3.80			
Organisational support	Experience	Less than 10 years	3.88	3.68	3.120	.032*
		10-20 years	3.32			
		20 years & above	3.84			
Employee Commitment	Experience	Less than 10 years	3.64	3.44	8.005	.000**
		10-20 years	3.58			
		20 years & above	3.10			

Source: Data compilation by the scholar for the present study

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to study the relationship between employee empowerment and organisational support and between employee empowerment and employee commitment and also to study the impact of demographic factors on employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment. The results revealed a positive relationship between organisational support and empowerment. Also it was found that there is a positive relationship between employee commitment and empowerment which stands in line with the previous research (Smith *et al.*, 2010)^[33].

The results indicate that the perceptual differences of respondents are statistically significant when the differences are evaluated on the basis of gender as the p value is less than .05 in every variable, thereby indicating gender has an impact on how the respondents perceive about empowerment, organisational support and commitment. It was also checked whether the differences between the administrative and academic staff are statistically significant or not regarding employee empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment. The results revealed that the difference is merely an outcome of chance factor and not statistically significant. The final results also revealed that there is significant difference in the perception of faculty members across different experience groups towards the variables under study. Thereby indicating experience has an impact on empowerment, organisational support and employee commitment.

Suggestions

- 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 etc.
- Organisational support has direct relationship with the employee empowerment. 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.
- Awareness programmes should be conducted by Universities regarding empowerment, organisational support schemes etc.
- Friendly environment should be created in the universities which will create a sense of belongingness among the administrative and academic staff.

Limitations

In the present study, the research approach and design used are based on previous related studies, but still following limitations have been observed:

- In the present study, the universities of Jammu & Kashmir were included to investigate the influence between the variables under study, including greater number of institutes from other regions as well in the future research could reveal more generalizable results.
- The study focused on higher education sector only. The scope of the research could be widened by including more levels like primary, middle, undergraduate levels in the future research.
- The analysis suffers from sample size. Larger and representative sample is needed to further investigate the variables under study.

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