EMPOWERMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the impact of structural and psychological empowerment on organizational commitment from the perspective of a sample of academic staff working within selected Jordanian governmental universities. It also aimed to assess the mediating role of motivation between these constructs.

Samples of 500 questionnaires were distributed via an electronic questionnaire and 287 were completed and returned for analysis. Three significant relationships were found between structural empowerment and motivation; psychological empowerment and motivation; and between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. It was found, however, that employee motivation does not have any mediating effect on these relationships.

Future research may benefit from exploring the hypotheses in this study different contexts and industrial settings. Furthermore, investigation into which approaches to employee empowerment generate the greatest levels of organizational commitment would provide some practical insight for organizations and human resource practitioners.

Keywords: Empowerment**,** Organizational Commitment, Motivation, Jordan, Governmental Universities**.**

INTRODUCTION

The concept of organizational commitment in its broadest sense has been widely debated by researchers and scholars across the world and in different contexts and industrial settings. It has been described as the psychological connection that employees feel towards their organization and has been claimed to be a significant factor in developing and sustaining motivation and ultimately enhancing overall organizational performance (Tran et al., 2020). Organizational commitment has also been acknowledged as being a major aspect of the employees' organizational code of conduct, which has been found to impact positively on organizational success (Al-Hawary & Alajmi, 2017). Organizational commitment largely determines the products of an organization, such as organizational behavior; performance; and absenteeism. For this reason, employee commitment has been a particularly interesting field for executives as well as researchers.

Empowerment is an organizational strategy utilized to develop workers' skills, capabilities and responsibilities and ultimately result in them working more efficiently and effectively (Blom et al., 2018). Studies have suggested that when workers are empowered in their roles, they develop a sense of commitment to their organization which supports them to develop, compete

and deal with challenges inside and outside the organization (Sahoo et al., 2010). Empowerment has also been shown to develop creativity and initiative, and increase motivation which leads to greater job satisfaction (Madanat, 2018). A higher level of job satisfaction in turn makes workers more cooperative and efficient (Hamidizadeh, 2012). Organizational commitment, therefore, has been shown to be a driving factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness, flexibility, and performance (Fulei et al., 2014).

Empowerment has often been positioned as a management technique for promoting organizational development. Within the context of academia, empowered educators are more likely to take responsibility for pursuing new and innovative educational initiatives and in facilitating and encouraging student success (Avidov et al., 2014). Furthermore, empowerment offers university lecturers autonomy and status which can result in successful leadership and increased job satisfaction (Jabbar et al., 2020).

Despite the widespread interest in the concept of organizational commitment and the role of empowerment in achieving this, it is an area that has generally been less well researched in the context of academia (Al Zeer, Alkhatib & Alshrouf, 2019). Given the important role universities have in generating human and psychological capital, and supporting the development of a knowledge-based economy (Abu-Rumman, 2018) gaining a deeper understanding of organizational commitment in this context makes a valuable contribution to the body of evidence in this field. Furthermore, within academic institutions, organizational commitment is an ongoing concern; particularly for those which have a high turnover of academic staff (Matimbwa & Ochumbo, 2019). Such institutions cannot of operate without the critical competencies of academic staff, and so therefore organizational commitment to retain experienced staff is a key priority particularly in developing countries such as Jordan (Abu-Rumman, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Commitment –The Concept

Recently, the concept of organizational commitment has been the center of attention and a key feature of human resource management. Organizational commitment plays a significant role in shaping staff members' attitudes towards the organization; their passion and loyalty (Al-Hawary & Alajmi, 2017). Back in the 1970s when the theory around organizational commitment was emerging, Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian (1974) defined the organizational commitment as the strong personality of individuals and their participation in the organization. They specified three characteristics that commitment has including: valuing the goals and values; readiness to pay effort; and eagerness to maintain membership. Al-Hawary & Alajmi (2017) denoted organizational commitment as the psychological link that connects workers to the organization, and it makes them obliged to the organizational values and targets. From their study of organizational commitment, Meyer & Allen (1991) concluded that commitment is a multi-dimensional structure comprising of: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. From their work, they developed a model for assessing levels of organizational commitment and this was used to support the development of the research tool used in this study.

Empowerment -The Concept

Empowerment has been described as the opportunity an individual has for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in decision making in organizations (Meng & Sun, 2019).

Since the 1980s, there has been an increased interest in empowerment in diverse areas within the fields of psychology and management and its relationship with organizational commitment and organizational performance. In an academic context, it has been proposed that lecturers must be empowered in order to make instructional decisions so that they can find more creative approaches to stimulate optimal students' engagement (Kangas, Siklander, Randolph & Ruokamo, 2017). Without this autonomy, feelings of frustration and job dissatisfaction can occur, leading to reduced levels of organizational commitment.

Two key types of empowerment are identified in the current literature including structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. Structural empowerment is denoted as the organizational mechanisms which make it possible for the management to assign tasks and decision-making abilities for employees (Kanter, 1993). From a structural view, empowerment overcomes the obstacles that can exist amongst the levels of management which in turn can lead to better communicating and information sharing, and more active involvement in decision-making processes (Baird & Wang, 2010; Haas, 2010). According to (Kanter, 1979) structural empowerment has four dimensions, namely: access to information, access to resources, opportunity, and support. Structural empowerment aims to create attractive and retainable workplaces work places that keep employees attached to the organization. Employees will be willing to be more involved in the organization when they are allowed to improve their skills and enhance their competence, and their efforts are appreciated and rewarded. Previous studies showed a positive correlation between organizational structural empowerment and organizational commitment. Empowerment makes organizations easier to deal with. From an academic perspective, universities that been empowered, provide the unrestricted accessibility to their academic resources and information which enables academics to be able to take good decisions and quick actions. Also, it allows for this information to be shared amongst academics for better use and more accomplishment.

Psychological empowerment has been described as a process of heightening feelings of employee self-efficacy which is generated by the identification and removal of conditions that foster powerlessness (Al-Madadha et al., 2019), and is proposed as raising an individual's convictions about their own effectiveness (Jordan et al., 2017). It has also been referred to as an increased intrinsic motivation in the performance of a function (Romo et al., 2020) and understood as a motivational construct based on four dimensions include: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Spreitzer, 1995). From within an academia context, studies have suggested that psychological empowerment of academic staff can be increased in a range of ways including the use of rewards and incentives, acknowledgement, proper placement, and recognition (Owan et al., 2020). Often regarded as a motivational practice that aims to increase the performance, psychological empowerment of workers increases the participative opportunities and involvement of workers in decision-making and task performance.

Empowerment, Organizational Commitment and Motivation

There is strong evidence to support the view that employee empowerment leads to a greater organizational commitment. One reason proposed for this is because empowered

employees think that their efforts are more appreciated and supported by the organization. In this way, employees can become more attached, emotionally, to the organization with a higher sense of belonging, and believe in the organization's goals and values. (Gardner et al., 2011) argued that empowerment fulfill workers' needs for independency, relatedness and competence which leads to a sense of belonging to the organization as well as strengthened commitment. Strongly committed employees can achieve the organizational goals, and they benefit the institution as a whole. Furthermore, an organization whose employees have a strong level of organizational commitment benefit from reduced levels of turnover and recruitment costs (Tran et al., 2020). Motivation has been the focus of study for many years and is rooted in the most of the academic fields including: education, political science, sociology, economics and psychology. As a concept, motivation may be explained as a process which initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors (Munyengabe et al., 2017). The role motivation plays in promoting organizational commitment and its connection with empowerment has also been a subject of much debate, and has been proposed in some studies as having a mediating effect on these constructs and so was therefore included in the scope of this study.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the discussion above, the aim of this study was to examine the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment in the context of government universities based within Jordan. The following hypotheses were developed for testing:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relation between structural empowerment and motivation.
Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relation between structural empowerment and organizational commitment.
Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and motivation.
Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.
Hypothesis 5: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.
Hypothesis 6: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between structural empowerment and organizational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

To examine the influence of structural and psychological empowerment on organizational commitment, and the mediating effect of employee's motivation, a quantitative methodological approach was used. This involved conducting an online survey of academic staff working within governmental universities located in Jordan. The content of the questionnaire was based on the tools used in previous studies including those of (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and their multi conceptual model of commitment. The questionnaire itself was divided into three parts: demographic variables of the study sample; exogenous items relating to employee empowerment (structural and psychological); and endogenous items including motivation and organizational commitment items. It asked for respondents to rate their views against these items based on their experiences and perceptions of working within their organization.

The study sample in this research was lecturers based in five Jordanian governmental universities. Using random sampling, a sample of 500 lecturers was selected. Permission and

approval were first sought from the selected universities, and the survey was distributed electronically *via* email with the support of the participating institutions.

RESULTS

Response Rate

Table 1: Of the 500 lecturers invited to participate in the study, 287 responded giving a response rate of 57% as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 SUMMARY OF RESPONSE RATE	
Questionnaires administered	500
Undelivered	121
Uncompleted	92
Completed	287
Response rate (287/500)	57 %

A statistical report, issued by the Jordan University (2018), noted there were around 2,000 lecturers during the year 2018 in the target universities. Whilst the 287 respondents to this study represents a relatively small proportion of the overall number of lecturers in the target population, it was felt that the response rate was sufficient to give reliability in the results and to robustly indicate areas for future research where a larger sample could be selected.

Respondent Profile

Table 2: In this paper, the study sample was taken with respect to four characteristics including: (1) gender, (2) experience, (3) marital status, (4) income to provide some contextual background to the analysis. The profile is provided in Table 2.

Table 2 RESPONDENT PROFILE			
Characteristics		**Frequency**	**% of Total**
Gender	Male	195	68%
	Female	92	32%
	Total	287	100%
Experience	Less than 5 years	72	25%
	5-10 years	94	33%
	11-15 years	100	35%
	More than 15 years	21	7%
	Total	287	100%
Marital Status	Single	92	32%

	Married	180	63%
	Divorced	15	5%
	Total	287	100%
Income	Less than 1000 JD	69	24%
	1000-2000 JD	117	41%
	2000-3000 JD	66	23%
	More than 3000 JD	35	12%
	Total	287	100%

Reliability and Normality

Table 3 RELIABILITY RESULTS OF STUDY CONSTRUCTS						
Variable Name		**Abbreviation**	**Original Items**	**Items after CFA**	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**Composite Reliability**
Structural empowerment	Information	TLD	5	2	0.92	0.606043
	Knowledge	TSP	5	2	0.91	0.923231
	Power	TCF	5	2	0.89	0.848812
	Rewards	THR	5	3	0.83	0.953195
Psychological empowerment	Meaning	TAP	5	3	0.90	0.977802
	Self-determination	TPM	5	2	0.87	0.770133
	Competence	SQ	5	2	0.90	0.957588
	Impact	SQ	5	0	Deleted	Deleted
Motivation		SAT	5	3	0.90	0.881143
Organizational commitment		PL	5	2	0.82	0.983941
Total items			50	21		

Goodness of Fit Indices

The "Confirmatory Factor Analysis" was run for all of the construct and measurement models. As Bagozzi & Yi (1988) mentioned the model fit with criteria such as (GFI>0.90, CFI>0.90, TLI>0.90, and RMSEA<0.08. Figure 1 illustrates that the goodness of fit, for the generated model, is better than the empirical model. However, as (Hair et al., 2017) noted, all CFAs of constructs produce a relatively good fit as indicated by the goodness of fit indices such as (GFI) of (>0.90), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of values less than 0.08. Therefore, Figure 1 show that the goodness of fit of generating model is better compared to the hypothesized model.
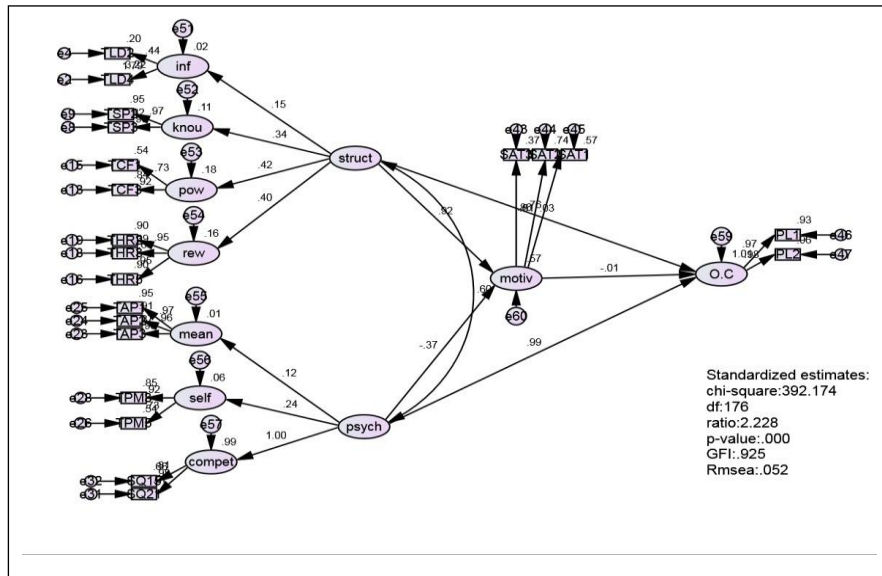
FIGURE 1
GOODNESS OF FIT

Hypotheses Results

The "direct effect" represents (the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable present the direct effect). Figure 1 and Table 3 show the hypotheses test (direct effect) of the independent variable on the dependent variable, to find the significance of each path coefficient, the estimate of regression weight, the standard error of regression weight and the critical ratio for regression weight (C.R= dividing the regression weight estimate by the estimate of its standard error gives).

Thus, there were three significant relationships between structural empowerment and motivation, psychological empowerment and motivation, psychological empowerment and organizational commitment (H1, H3, and H4). While, one was not significant (H2).

H.	Regression Weights From	To	Estimate	SE	C.R.	*P*	Hypothesis
**Table 4**
**DIRECT HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULT OF GENERATING MODEL**
H1	structural	Motivation	2.087	0.625	3.339	***	YES
H2	structural	Organizational commitment	0.095	0.307	0.309	0.758	NO
H3	psychological	Motivation	1.443	0.695	2.076	0.038	YES
H4	psychological	Organizational commitment	5.546	1.263	4.390	***	YES

Mediating Effect of Employee Motivation

> *H5: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment.*
>
> *H6: Employee motivation mediates the relationship between structural empowerment and organizational commitment.*

From the Table 5: It is shown that motivation does not have any mediating effect. This is because the direct effects between employee empowerment and organizational commitment have more than the indirect effects. For example, the mediating effect of employee motivation in the relationship between structural and organizational commitment as shown in Table 5, the indirect effect is - 0.011, which is less than the direct effect which is 0.029. While, the total effect is 0.018. This result confirms that employee motivation does not mediate the relationship between employee empowerment and organizational commitment.

Table 5
THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION BETWEEN EMPLOYEE (STRUCTURAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL) EMPOWERMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Hypothesis	From	Mediation	To	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total Effect	Mediating
H5	Psychological	Motivation	Organizational commitment	0.991	0.004	0.995	No mediation
H6	Structural	Motivation	Organizational commitment	0.029	- 0.011	0.018	No mediation

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study adds to the limited but growing research on the relationship between psychological and structural empowerment and organizational commitment in the context of academia. The study confirmed that there were significant relationships between structural empowerment and motivation, psychological empowerment and motivation, and psychological empowerment and organizational commitment. However, it was not found that motivation had a mediating role between empowerment and perceptions of organizational commitment.

The results of the study therefore emphasize on the importance of empowering employees in universities in availing more committed, highly motivated and enthusiastic workers with less turnover intentions. For employees, empowerment in their field leads to job excellence. Conversely, it can be proposed that a lack of empowerment may produce dissatisfied employees and lower levels of commitment.

Although the study has generated some valuable results and evidence, the sample was relatively small and only focused on a limited number of universities based in Jordan. Future research may benefit from exploring the hypotheses in different contexts and settings. Furthermore, investigation into which approaches to employee empowerment generate the greatest levels of organizational commitment would provide some practical insight for organizations and human resource practitioners.

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