The Moderation Effect of the Teachers' Anxiety on the Relationship Between Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

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ABSTRACT This study aims to determine the moderation effect of anxiety competencies of teachers on the relationship between primary empowerment and organizational commitment. The target population of this research, which is in causal-comparative model, consists of school administrators and teachers working in primary schools in the city center of Kahramanmaras in 2012-2013 academic year. The sampling of the research consists of 165 teachers who were selected randomly from the target population. Data were analyzed by hierarchical multiple linear regression method. As a result, empowerment competencies of teachers and anxiety competencies of teachers significantly predict Organizational Commitment levels. The results of the moderation tests show that teachers' anxiety is moderator of the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment levels.

INTRODUCTION

As a management concept, empowerment can be described as increasing people's rights to decide and the process of educating people through solidarity, sharing, training and team work (Kocel 1999). Not seeing employees as passive beings or objects, esteeming and recognizing them in various issues and minimizing the power gap between the employers are gaining more importance (Sisman and Turan 2002). Today while experts' roles in organizations are gaining importance day by day, the source of power is shifted towards the people who are in lower positions from the people who held the power as a result of the position they traditionally have (Hale and Whitlam 1998).

The concept of staff empowerment is one of the most controversial management concepts especially since the 1990s. For many organizations, empowerment is seen as a key to increase employees' potentiality, efficiency and quality (Cook et al. 1997). Staff empowerment, in the sense of purpose and outcome is used in the meaning of "feeling yourself strong, believing in yourself and being skillful, but as a process according to personal and specialization area it is used in the meaning of changing structural and personal conditions for people to gain power and empowerment" (Simsek 2004).

It is seen that the concept of staff empowerment is basically dealt in "behavioral and cognitive dimensions" (Bolat 2003). Behavioral dimension especially focuses on what organizations' top management should do at the empowerment phase and it tries to explain how an appropriate environment can be built up, but the cognitive dimension includes the analysis of how employees perceive the available environment and focuses on how these perceptions can be developed.

Organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization, that is, it is the employees orientation toward the organization in terms of his or her loyalty to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Robbins and Coulter 2007).

Organizational commitment is divided into three different sub categories in literature as;

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affective, normative and continuance commitment (Allen and Meyer 1991). Affective commitment refers to employees' affective attachment to organization, identification with organization and active involvement in organizational processes. Employees with high affective commitment levels stay in organization because they intrinsically desire to stay (Meyer and Allen 1991) This level of commitment represents the "want to" level of commitment (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002) Normative commitment refers to obligation to stay in organization due to ethical reasons. This level is defined as "have to" level since those who remain out of a sense of obligation (normative commitment) may do likewise only if they see it as a part of their duty, or as a means of reciprocation for benefits received (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002) Continuance commitment reflects awareness about costs of leaving the organization. Employees who have continuance commitment continue to stay in the organization because they need this (Meyer and Allen 1991)

Anxiety is an intense feeling of apprehension and fear and experienced by many people in circumstances where these emotions are warranted such as acute physical danger. But since the dawn of psychology and psychotherapy, psychoanalytic scholars have suggested that anxiety, at an unconscious level, is virtually endemic to the human condition. Recently researchers have proposed that individual anxiety has an organizational analogue and have suggested some reasons for its existence (Voyer et al. 1997).

The literature defines organizational anxiety as an organizations member's emotional physiological response to organizational activities. These activities include three levels as; tasks people do, personal histories and primitive survival. It is possible to identify four parts of organizational anxiety: causes, reactions, outcomes, and solutions (Anderson and Schwager 2007). Organizational anxiety can result from inappropriate, unarticulated or conflicting goals, time pressure, poor leadership, and mixed messages (Melymuka 2003). As for the response; manageable levels of anxiety are normal and often stimulate an adaptive stress response. If the response to a perceived threat is disproportionate or prolonged, normal processes break down leading to adverse impacts on individuals and the organization (Baruch et al 2007). The outcomes of uncontained organizational anxiety are decreased productivity, decreased creativity, decreased

morale, increased attrition, personality conflict, turf wars, and faulty decision making (Anderson and Schwager 2007). The literature also suggests solutions for containing, or controlling, organizational anxiety. These include: Voyer et al. (1997) suggest reducing negative behavior by focusing on positive causal loops (Accountability/empowerment, Ability to succeed, Pressure to learn and perform) and increasing the use of feedback loops (inquiry skills) to promote understanding, learning, and questioning. James and Clark (2002) focused on the effect of moving the locus of the anxiety container. A key issue is employee internalization of the move. Success requires training, coaching, rewarding. Millers' (2003) solutions focus on management style and intervention. Managers must deal with their own anxiety and not pass it on over functioning and pursuing (Anderson and Schwager 2007). .

Very few studies have examined the moderating effects of organizational commitment. This study aims to assess the moderating effect of teachers' anxiety levels on the relationship between primary empowerment and organizational commitment. That is, it is assumed that when individuals are high in staff empowerment, and when their level of anxiety decrease, they will have a higher level of organizational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

As the study aims to analyze the relationship between empowerment and teachers' anxiety levels and organizational commitment, causal-comparative model is used as the research design. In causal-comparative model (Fraenkel and Wallen 2006), causes of an existing situation or event are analyzed based on cause-effect relationships.

The universe of the study comprises of teachers and teachers employed in primary schools located in Kahramanmaras city centre in 2010-2011 academic year. Research sampling includes 165 teachers (59.6% female) with a mean age of 42.1 (SD = 5.8) selected randomly from the research universe.

Data Collection Tools

Three research scales were used in order to collect data needed for the research. The first scale, developed and revised by Meyer and Allen

(1997) and adapted to Turkish by Karakus (2005) is the "Three Dimensioned Organizational Commitment Scale", that consists of three subscales "affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment" (Meyer and Allen 1997). Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.86 after the reliability analysis.

The second scale, the namely "School Personnel Empowerment Scale" developed by Short and Rinehart (1994) was adapted to Turkish by Toremen et al. (2011). The scale has six subscales: "decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact". Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.795 after the reliability analysis.

The third scale, Test Anxiety Inventory developed by Taylor and Deane (2002) was adapted to Turkish by Senay et al. (2012). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.853 after the reliability analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data gathered during the study was analyzed in SPSS 17.0 statistical package program. Data were analyzed by hierarchical multiple linear regression model. Before analysis of the data, missing values, outliers, normality, multicollinearity were analyzed, in other words, premises of analysis were tested. While analyzing the effects of empowerment and anxiety independent variables on the organizational commitment as dependent variable, hierarchical multiple *linear* regression model was used.

Hayes and Matthes (2009) defines moderation effect as the change another predictor /moderator variable (F) makes on the strength or direction of the relationship between predictor (Y) and predicted/criterion variable (K). Moderation tests refer to a third moderator variable affecting the relationship between two variables. For example, a researcher in social psychology has found out that repression causes aggression. When the researcher tests this hypothesis in different cultures (east and west cultures), he conducts a moderator test. He tests the hypothesis that repression causes less aggression in east cultures than it does in west cultures. So, the culture variable becomes a moderator variable in this case (Simsek 2007: 21).

Analyses will be made following the steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) in implementation of moderation test. In order not to face problem of multicollinearity, before initiating the regression analysis, researchers advise predictor variables to be subtracted from their averages, thus, getting (centering) new averages (Y' and F') and also creating interaction values (Y'x F') by multiplication of these new variables. When centering process is not executed, multiplication of data with high scores will be more related and a high multicollinearity problem will arise (Frazier et al. 2004). Standardized z scores produced by SPSS easily were centered in order to center the data. When analyzing the effect of a predictor in multiple regression analysis of these scores transformed, the effects of others are considered to be null.

Processes to follow in order to understand whether there is a moderation effect of a third variable in the relationship between two variables are explained below:

As can be seen in Figure 1, let us have three variables; (Y) Predictor, (K) Predicted /Criterion and (F) Moderator. In the first step of hierarchical regression analysis, the effect of centered scores of (Y) predictor on (K) predicted is analyzed. In the second step, (F) moderator variable is added to the model, in the third step, after the interaction variable that is gathered by multiplying the scores of (Y) predictor variable and (F) moderator variable is analyzed, the effect of these variables on (K) predicted variable are analyzed. According to Baron and Kenny (1986: 1174), even if the basic effect in the 1st and 2nd steps is found to be insignificant, when only the interaction variable is found to be significant, it is sufficient for assessment of moderation effect.

After hierarchical regression analyses are made, in the analysis of moderation effect, Mod-Graph-I program that was developed by Jose (2008) and is open to use in his website was uti-
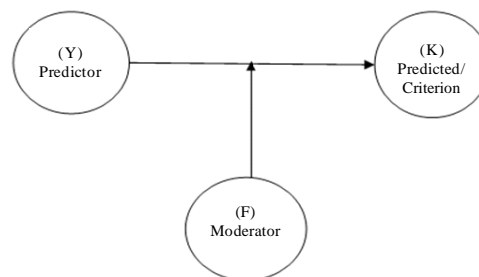

Fig. 1. Moderation effect in Baron and Kenny model

lized. Data gathered from regression analysis were inserted into this program, thus, basic curve values were calculated and moderation graphs were created. +1 SD (Standard Deviation) and -1 SD values of averages of predictor and continuous moderator variables were calculated in the program used when these graphs were created. These values were classified as high, medium and low groups and were used in program analysis (Frazier et al. 2004).

RESULTS

Findings and results of hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis that is employed to study the moderation effect of teachers' anxiety levels on the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment s are provided below. When the effect of multiplication of empowerment and anxiety on organizational commitment is analyzed in the moderation test analysis, empowerment and anxiety variables were added to the model as control variables.

Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis made in three steps and employed to test the moderation effect of teachers' anxiety levels on the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment are provided below in Table 1. It was found out that in the first step of hierarchical multiple regression analysis; the independent variable empowerment levels z scores significantly predict teachers' organizational commitment.

Teachers' centered anxiety levels scores were added to the model in the second step and it was observed that teachers' anxiety levels and empowerment levels significantly teachers' predict organizational commitment. In the final step, interaction variable gathered from multiplication of z scores of empowerment levels and z scores of teachers' anxiety levels were added to the analysis and it was found out that interaction variable significantly predicts organizational commitment together with the two other variables.

The fact that interaction variable was found to have a significant effect on organizational commitment indicates that there is a significant difference in the curve of teachers whose anxiety levels are different in the relationship between empowerment levels and organizational commitment.

Regression results in Table 1 were added to Mod Graph-I program developed by Jose (2008) in order to obtain the graph in Figure 2. The graph shows that when teachers' anxiety levels increase on horizontal axis in all three straight lines, organizational commitment levels in vertical axis increase. As illustrated on the graph, these three lines represent teachers in three different anxiety categories. Based on this, slope of teachers who have low anxiety levels is bigger. It can thus be argued that organizational commitment levels of teachers who have low levels of anxiety are more influenced by empowerment levels.

DISCUSSION

Similar to our findings and conclusion it was determined by Toremen et al. (2011), Demirer et al. (2008), Wu and Short (1996) and Borghei et al. (2010) that personnel empowerment has a positive effect on organizational commitment. However, Liu et al. (2007) determined that there was no significant relation between empowerment and continuance commitment.

Table 1: Regression analysis showing the moderation effect of teachers' anxiety on the relationship between the empowerment and organizational commitment

Model							
		Dependent variable: Organizational commitment					
Independent variables		*B*	*Std.hata*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*	*F*
1st Step	(Constant)	3.681	.048		77.388	.000	10.184**
	Emp. (z values)	.152	.048	.242	3.191	.002	
2nd Step	(Constant)	3.681	.045		81.546	.000	15.147***
	Emp. (z values)	.171	.045	.272	3.756	.000	
	Anx. (z values)	.198	.045	.316	4.357	.000	
3rd Step	(Constant)	3.672	.045		81.549	.000	11.471***
	Emp. (z values)	.173	.045	.276	3.842	.000	
	Anx. (z values)	.184	.046	.294	4.034	.000	
	Emp. X Anx.	-.097	.051	-.138	-1.905	.049	

$\Delta R^2 = .019^*$
*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Anxiety —■— High —▲— Med —✕— Low
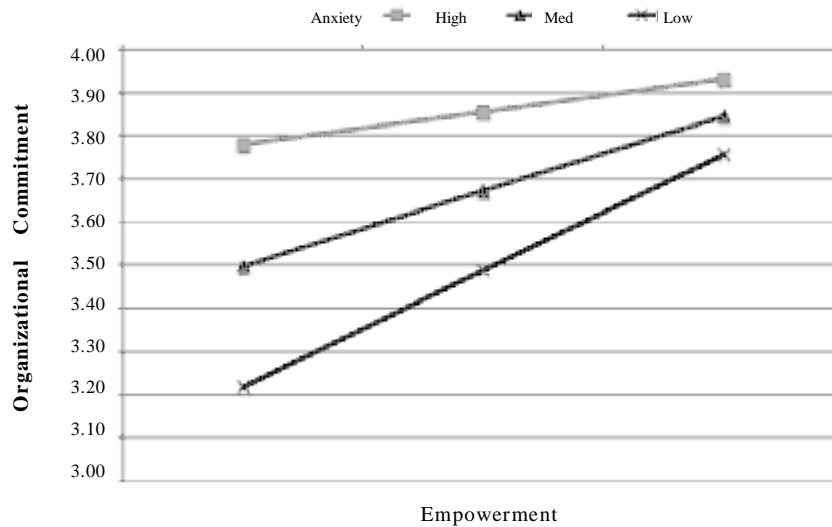
Fig. 2. The graph of moderation effect of teachers' anxiety levels on the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment

The teachers that are provided with professional growth opportunities and feel they have an effect on the school issues become more committed to their profession and to the school where they work. In similar research, it was determined that the impact dimension of the personnel empowerment increases affective commitment (Dogan and Demiral 2009) and the professional growth dimension has a positive effect on organizational commitment generally (Bogler and Somech 2004). As Meyer Allen (1997) stated, a person is committed computationally to a profession or organization for the sake of the material benefits and status that are gained by the profession or organization, so the person develops "continuance commitment" in order not to lose the benefits gained.

In similar research, Demirer et al. (2008) found the moderation effect of perceived accountability on the relationship between anxiety and organizational commitment. Namasivayam and Zhao (2007) found that the affective component of organizational commitment has stronger direct effects on job satisfaction than normative organizational commitment; continuance commitment had no effect. Joo and Shim (2010) found that psychological empowerment and organizational learning culture positively and significantly affected the level of employees' organizational commitment. They also found that moderation

effects of organizational learning culture were found to be significant.

CONCLUSION

The first result of the study is that empowerment levels generally have a positive effect on organizational commitment. The results of this study show that empowerment by the school management plays an important role in the realization of organizational commitment Personnel empowerment predicts the organizational commitment levels significantly. Looking at the results of analysis of the moderation effect of the teachers' anxiety on the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment; it can be clearly derived that teachers' anxiety levels was found to have a moderating effect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keeping in mind that empowerment and anxiety levels that teachers have influence organizational commitment, it is strongly advised that pre-service and in-service training should be given to the whole school staff, primarily school administrators, so as to equip staff with these competencies which is of great importance in terms of school effectiveness and efficiency.

This study has revealed that anxiety has a moderation effect on the relationship between

empowerment and organizational commitment. Researchers could study other variables that can have moderation effects. Organizational commitment is considered as an outcome variable that is influenced by empowerment and anxiety in this study. Researcher can take other result variables (burn-out, job satisfaction etc.) as dependent variable and study the relationships.

With regard to moderation effects, teacher's anxiety levels moderated the relationship between empowerment and organizational commitment. For employees who perceive themselves as highly competent and lack self-determination to increase their level of organizational commitment, firms need to develop a better organizational learning culture, promote inquiry and dialogue, encourage collaboration and team learning, empower people to have a collective vision, connect the organization to the environment, and use strategic leaders who model and support learning at the individual, team, and organization levels.

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