



## Research Paper

# Examining the relationship between meritocracy and job stress with emphasis on the mediating role of structural empowerment

Maqsood Esmailpour<sup>1</sup> , Abbas Rezaei<sup>2</sup>

1- Ph.D. Student OF Educational management, Tonkabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonkabon, Iran.

2- Director of the Young Researchers and Elite Club, Sari Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sari, Iran.

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**Abstract**

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between meritocracy and job stress, emphasizing the mediating role of structural empowerment. The statistical population of the research was made up of 266 primary school teachers in Sari city. 157 people were selected as a statistical sample based on Cochran's formula and simple random sampling method. In order to collect data, standard questionnaires of meritocracy (Nikoukar, 2015), structural empowerment (Idris et al, 2018) and job stress (Health & Safety Executive, 2011) were used. To determine the validity of the research tool from face validity, content and analysis A confirmatory factor was used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the research tools. In order to analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. In order to test the research hypotheses, the structural equation technique was used using SmartPLS statistical software. The results showed that meritocracy structural empowerment with an impact factor of 0.69, structural empowerment on job stress with an impact factor (-0.39), meritocracy on job stress with an impact factor of (-0.15). On the other hand, meritocracy indirectly The impact coefficient (-0.26) has had an impact on job stress. In other words, structural empowerment has played a mediating role in the impact of meritocracy on job stress.

**Keywords:**

meritocracy,  
occupational stress,  
structural empowerment.

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Corresponding Author: Abbas Rezaei	<a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4389-7589">https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4389-7589</a>	
Email: <a href="mailto:abbas.rezaei@iau.ir">abbas.rezaei@iau.ir</a>	Creative Commons: CC BY 4.0	



## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

Human resources are considered to be the most valuable resources of organizations, which can achieve organizational goals with the efforts of everyone and creating harmony between them and using them and other components of the organization correctly (Mijs, 2021). These resources have abilities and capabilities. are potentials that become actions in the organizational environment, and achieving this goal requires full understanding and recognition of people and providing suitable conditions for work and effort (van Dijk et al, 2020). Primary school teachers, due to their nature The work they have and the amount of time they spend with this group of students and considering the problems that children have, they suffer a lot of psychological pressure, and this psychological pressure may affect the family life and relationships with the teachers' family members. data and feel a low quality of life (Hao et al, 2015). One of the indicators that plays an effective role in reducing the job stress of teachers is the use of meritocracy in the education system of the country. Nowadays, empowerment as one of the Useful tools for improving the quality of employees and increasing organizational effectiveness are considered as one of the important concepts of human resources growth and have become the hottest topics of management day (Abdel-Dayem et al, 2021). Investigating effective factors on increasing employee empowerment. It increases the managerial ability to achieve organizational goals, because empowerment creates a potential capacity to exploit human ability (Vahedi, 2021). In an empowered organization, employees bring the best innovations and ideas to the organization and prefer the interests of the organization over individual interests, therefore, paying attention and giving importance to the empowerment of employees is known as an important and effective factor in the progress of organizations, and the general and basic goal of this It will be necessary to always identify and determine the effective factors and pay attention to the extent of their role and influence in the matter of empowering the employees, which leads to the strengthening of the general behaviors and efficient professional behaviors of the employees, so that suggestions can be made with the help of such results. presented in order to improve the performance of employees (Connolly et al, 2018).

According to the above presented materials, the main problem of the current research is to investigate the relationship between meritocracy and job stress with emphasis on the mediating role of structural empowerment among primary school teachers in Ardakan city?

### Theoretical framework

Structural empowerment theory states that certain factors in the work environment can enable or inhibit employees' ability to perform their jobs in meaningful ways. The four empowerment structures are: access to resources needed for work, access to information needed to do work, as well as knowledge and understanding of the organization about responsibilities and job performance, an opportunity for professional growth and development (Clavelle et al, 2016). Meritocracy is a system in which competent people are appointed at the right place and time and the best use is made of them in line with individual, organizational and social goals (Suzuki & Hur, 2021). US Department of Health Stress has defined a job as follows: Harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the abilities of the resources or the needs of the employee (Minihan et al, 2022). Job stress includes a pattern of reactions that when It happens that employees are faced with demands in the workplace that do not match their knowledge, skills or abilities, which in turn challenges the individual's ability to adapt. These demands may be related to time pressure or the amount of work (quantitative demands) or to the difficulty of work (cognitive demands) or the



empathy required in work (emotional demands), or high physical demands or even to the lack of Ability to show emotions at work (Heydari, 2022).

(Trinchese et al, 2024) in a research they conducted on employees of knowledge-based organizations concluded that there is a significant relationship between meritocracy and employee empowerment and innovative behaviors have played a mediating role in this relationship. (Mahmoudi, 2023) In a research conducted on the employees and managers of post offices in Qazvin province, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between leadership styles and employee empowerment, and the variables of meritocracy and perceived organizational support had a partial moderating role in this relationship (Minihan et al, 2022) in their research evaluated job stress in Irish teachers and admitted that the presence of job stress in teachers had reduced their job performance.

### **Research Methodology**

The current research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive in terms of data analysis of correlation type (structural equation modeling). The statistical population of this research was formed by all the teachers of primary schools in Sari city, numbering 266. 157 people were selected as a statistical sample based on Cochran's formula and simple random sampling method. To collect data, standard questionnaires of meritocracy (Nikoukar, 2015), structural empowerment (Idris et al, 2018) and occupational stress (Health & Safety Executive, 2011) were used. Checking the normality of data distribution and structural equation technique was used using SmartPLS statistical software.

### **Research Findings**

The results related to the first hypothesis showed that the power of meritocratic influence on structural empowerment was calculated equal to (0.69), which shows that the correlation is favorable. The significance statistic of the test was also obtained (26.7), which was more than the critical value of  $t$  at the 5% error level, i.e. (1.96) and shows that the observed correlation is significant. Therefore, it can be said that meritocracy has a positive effect on structural empowerment and have meaning The results related to the second hypothesis showed that the strength of the impact of structural empowerment on job stress was calculated as (-0.392), which shows that the correlation is favorable. The significance statistic of the test was also obtained (-6.978), which was less than the critical value of  $t$  at the 5% error level, i.e. (-1.96) and shows that the observed correlation is significant. Therefore, it can be said that structural empowerment has an effect on job stress. They are negative and significant. The results related to the third hypothesis showed that the influence of meritocracy on job stress was calculated equal to (-0.156), which shows that the correlation is favorable. The significance statistic of the test was also obtained (-2.778), which was less than the critical value of  $t$  at the 5% error level, i.e. (-1.96) and it shows that the observed correlation is significant. Therefore, it can be said that meritocracy has an effect on job stress. They are negative and significant. In order to measure the mediating role of structural empowerment, the Sobel test was used. The results related to the fourth hypothesis showed that the number obtained in the Sobel test is (6.604), which is more than the critical value of  $t$ , i.e. (1.96). Therefore, the mediating role of structural empowerment in This hypothesis was confirmed.

### **Conclusion**

The current research was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between meritocracy and job stress, emphasizing the mediating role of structural empowerment. The current research is in line with the results of (Sakhiyya & Locke, 2019), (Anggreyani & Satrya, 2020), (Orgambidez & Almeida, 2020), (Shirzadeh, 2022). When teachers'



performance is limited to presenting and performing brief assigned tasks, their professional development is different from when they themselves act as a compiler of tasks and job descriptions. Teachers' experiences are often similar, and they are always under pressure to finish the defined tasks as soon as possible. But when teachers are faced with legal authority, they show their initiative. After all, decentralized planning empowers teachers to design their professional development activities according to their organizational context and professional needs. And the education departments should design their teaching style optimally so that they can perform their best performance. The effort to perform an excellent performance puts pressure on the teachers and causes them stress so as not to get low feedback in this field. Therefore, aware and self-efficacious teachers, paying attention to their job description, use all their potential to improve performance in the field of student education.

Based on this, it is recommended that teacher training programs be designed in such a way that they gain sufficient mastery in their teaching skills. This can play an important role in the emergence of a meritocracy culture. The working system of education departments should provide a suitable platform to Focusing on the role of different work methods and evaluation, the necessary decisions should be taken for the transformation of some personality traits such as introversion-extroversion. This will have an effective role in the development of the professional ability of school teachers. Selection is one of the solutions through which He institutionalized the category of meritocracy in the work environment. The background and past interactions of job candidates should be carefully examined, especially for selection in jobs that require interpersonal interactions, agreeableness, and a lot of conscience. In this way, job stress caused by inadequacy can be reduced. Minimize employment among teachers. Education department managers can clearly define expectations and norms for behavior and interpersonal interactions in the workplace.