



Research Paper

Studying the role of structural empowerment in employees' organizational agility

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In today's dynamic and competitive environments, organizational agility is considered a vital factor for survival and growth. Structural empowerment, through the provision of necessary resources, access to information, and managerial support, can play a key role in enhancing agility at the employee level. This study aims to examine the role of structural empowerment in employees' organizational agility. The purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship between structural empowerment (organizational factors, management strategies, self-efficacy resources) and organizational agility of employees of the Karaj City Education Department. This study is descriptive-correlational in terms of method and applied in terms of purpose. The statistical population of the study consisted of 177 employees of the Karaj City Education Department. The sampling method was census. The data collection tool was the standard empowerment questionnaires of Kangaroo and Kanango (1998) and organizational agility of Tureng Lin et al. (2005). SPSS software and regression test and Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. The results of the study showed that there is a relationship between the dimensions of structural empowerment (organizational factors ($r=0.671$), management strategies ($r=0.737$), self-efficacy resources ($r=0.770$)) and structural agility of employees.

Keywords:

Structural empowerment, organizational agility, organizational factors, management strategies, self-efficacy resources.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

In recent decades, organizations have faced a challenging, changing and unpredictable environment; especially educational institutions such as education departments, which are at the heart of social, cultural and technological developments. In such circumstances, dynamism, flexibility and the ability to respond quickly to environmental changes are an undeniable necessity for the survival of organizations. The concept that expresses these characteristics in an integrated form is “organizational agility”. Organizational agility means the ability and capacity of an organization to respond quickly, flexibly and effectively to environmental changes, new technologies, stakeholder needs and market developments (Çakmak, 2023). In the meantime, “structural empowerment, as one of the key dimensions in human resource development, plays a significant role in promoting organizational agility. Structural empowerment includes providing employees with access to resources, information, support and growth opportunities within the organization. When employees have access to the resources necessary for decision-making and action, they will be more prepared to face changes and adopt innovative solutions (Gholtash, 2024). One of the most important factors affecting organizational agility is human resources, especially how they are managed, developed, and empowered. In fact, organizational agility cannot be realized without an informed, capable, and flexible workforce (Motwani & Katatria, 2024). From this perspective, human resource empowerment, as a new approach to human capital management, plays a key role in promoting organizational agility. Employee empowerment refers to a process that provides conditions for increasing self-efficacy, responsibility, initiative, and independent decision-making in employees (Ghorbani & Kamari, 2019). In the education system, as one of the most important social and infrastructural institutions of the country, achieving organizational agility is necessary not only to increase internal productivity but also to respond to the rapid changes in today's knowledge-based society. However, the traditional, bureaucratic, centralized, and regulation-oriented structure in many education departments in the country has challenged the possibility of agility. On the other hand, the lack of sufficient authority for employees, the lack of effective participation in decision-making, the lack of continuous learning opportunities, and resource limitations have led to a decrease in motivation, flexibility, and innovation in the employees of this institution (Sorori & Fahimi Nezhad, 2023). Given the importance of this issue, the main question of the present research is: What is the relationship between structural empowerment and organizational agility among employees of the Education Department of Karaj City?

Theoretical framework

Structural empowerment

Empowerment is the equivalent of the word "Empowerment", which is derived from the verb "Empower". This verb in the Oxford dictionary means to become strong, to authorize, to provide power and to become capable. In the "Webster" dictionary, empowerment is interpreted as delegating authority by granting legal power to others and is translated in the Comprehensive Dictionary of Management as giving authority and enabling (Tatari, 2017).



The word empowerment was first introduced in the 17th century and in legal texts in the sense of authority in investment. In the 19th century, it was taken into account by the fields of psychology, sociology and management. This word gained a wide range of meanings in the aforementioned fields and included the meaning of enabling or allowing. In the fields of psychology and medicine, empowerment includes behavioral and psychological changes resulting from patient-nurse interactions, while in management science, employee empowerment is considered as one of the important factors in improving organizational productivity (Sabetian et al, 2020).

Organizational agility

Organizational agility is the ability of an organization to respond quickly, flexibly, and effectively to environmental, market, and technological changes in a way that can maintain or enhance its competitive advantage. This concept is particularly relevant in response to turbulent, unpredictable, and complex conditions (Motwani & Katatria, 2024). According to the definition of Goldman et al. (1995), agility is the ability of an organization to succeed in markets with continuous change, uncertainty, and instability (Ghorbani & Kamari, 2019). In recent years, researchers such as Doz & Kosonen (2023) have emphasized the need to institutionalize agility as a sustainable competitive advantage (Desalegn et al, 2024). Various studies have identified various dimensions for organizational agility.

(Naim et al, 2024) pointed out effective indicators in empowerment in a study. The results of the study showed that structural empowerment can improve employee agility in the organization. (Zareei & Kohandel, 2024) also stated in a study that organizational agility has an effect on empowerment with the mediating role of information technology and the learning organization of employees of the country's skating boards. (Hanifah & Wicaksana, 2024) in their study examined the role of structural empowerment in improving the organizational agility of employees and concluded that the development of structural empowerment has improved the organizational agility of employees.

Research Methodology

The research method is descriptive-correlational. The statistical population of the study consisted of 177 employees of the Karaj Education Department. The sampling method was census. The data collection tools were the standard Kangaroo and Kanango empowerment questionnaires (1998) and Tureng Lin et al. organizational agility questionnaires (2005). To measure the validity of the research tools, face and content validity were used, and to measure the reliability of the research tools, Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Research Findings

The results of the demographic data of the statistical sample showed that male employees constituted 54% (96 people) and female employees constituted 46% (81 people) of the sample size. Employees with the age group of 31-40 years with (32) percent constituted the highest and employees with the age group of 20-30 years with (18) percent constituted the lowest sample members. Employees with master's degrees with (60) percent constituted the highest and employees with doctoral degrees with (2) percent constituted the lowest sample members.



Employees with work experience of 11-20 years with (46) percent constituted the highest and employees with work experience of more than 20 years with (23) percent constituted the lowest sample members. The results related to the descriptive statistics of the variables showed that the average of the questions was used for the operational definition of the variables and the lowest value of the range of changes for the organizational agility variable was 3.96 and the highest value of the range of changes for the management strategies variable was 4.80. Also, the mean scores for the empowerment variable are 4.7769 and for the organizational agility variable are 4.9922, which is greater than 4 (average of the 7-point Likert scale). Also, for all empowerment subscales, it is higher than 4, which indicates the respondents' tendency to agree and completely agree options.

Conclusion

The overall objective of the present study was to study the role of structural empowerment in employees' organizational agility. Based on the test of the first specific hypothesis, the research findings showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational factors and employees' organizational agility. The result is explained as follows: in organizations where goals are operationally and clearly specified and are at the forefront of the work of employees and experts in different units, individuals can more easily identify their organizational tasks and perform them with higher efficiency. The research findings related to the test of the second specific hypothesis indicate a positive and significant relationship between management strategies and employees' organizational agility. The result is explained as follows: employee evaluation should be limited to the scope of their duties, and organizations that reward their experts based on their competence can develop motivated, committed, and agile employees. In addition, employees who increase their knowledge and expertise in the organization can more easily adapt to organizational changes and make the right decisions in critical situations. The research findings related to the test of the third special hypothesis indicate a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy resources and organizational agility, and it is explained that organizations that introduce their exemplary experts as role models and reward and honor them create interest in other experts and lead them to more activities and greater effort. The research findings from the test of the main hypothesis are based on a positive and significant relationship between empowerment and organizational agility, and it can be concluded that the more employees are motivated to achieve their job and organizational goals, and have complete awareness in improving job performance, and also can express their feelings in relation to others. They can be satisfied in performing their job duties. On the other hand, the more employees are satisfied with teamwork and organizational relationships with colleagues and know that there is a possibility of progress and learning in their specialized and job position, and that proper planning has been done in performing job duties, their job motivation increases and therefore they use more capabilities. These results are consistent with the findings of research (Dehghani et al, 2021), (Hasanpour, 2023) and Rezaei Kalantari & Rezaei Abdolmaleki, 2020). In this regard, the following practical suggestions can be made: Organizational goals should be clear and unambiguous and announced to employees in the form of written organizational tasks. The tools and requirements of the experts' office should be made available to them in the shortest



possible time so that they have less wasted time in the organization. Experts should receive rewards and positions based on their individual merits, not just based on friendly relations and favoritism. A specific structure should be used in the organization so that the scope of organizational tasks of employees is specified and The organization's responsibilities should be separated. The limitations of the present study were that this study was conducted at the level of the Karaj City Education Department, so it should be considered to generalize it to other government departments and organizations. In this regard, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted in other statistical communities to increase the generalizability across a wide range of educational environments.