



Studying the Psychological Empowerment of Faculty Members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences in Southwestern Iran

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Considering the importance of empowering employees to increase their productivity and satisfying their job satisfaction, this research has investigated the psychological empowerment of faculty members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences in southwestern Iran.

Materials and Methods: This descriptive research was conducted in 2018. The statistical population of this research included all faculty members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences in southwest of Iran. Finally, 43 members completed questionnaires. The Spreitzer staff empowerment questionnaire has been used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data and SPSS version 22.

Results: In terms of the various components of empowerment of faculty members, the score of the areas of effectiveness (6.5 ± 2.4), sense of competence (4.4 ± 1.6), and the right to choose (4.4 ± 1.2), have been evaluated to be low, but the mean score of meaningfulness (7.3 ± 7.3) was evaluated as moderate. Also, the variables such as education, academic rank, and experience of faculty members did not have a significant effect on their empowerment ($P < 0.05$). However, gender ($P = 0.038$) and age ($P = 0.032$) of the faculty members had a significant effect on their empowerment score; female and older faculty members had an empowerment higher than the male and younger faculty members ($P = 0.019$).

Discussion and Conclusion: The findings of this research can be used by managers, faculty members and planners of holding courses of empowerment of faculty members at Iran's medical sciences universities and other similar universities and organizations. It is also necessary that the managers of the university under study, while reinforcing all aspects of empowering their faculty members, focus on the dimensions that have received fewer privileges.

Key words: Psychological empowerment, Faculty members, Dezful, Iran

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the organizations need empowered employees to be able to adapt to change in their changing environments, make informed decisions, be responsive, and with initiative and agility, quickly find and address the solution to difficulties. The development of such employees has raised the debate of empowerment of human resources as a new mission and responsibility for the individual and organizational development and growth, in order to enhance the productivity and optimal use of all employees' capacity and ability to meet organizational goals and missions. On the other hand, getting ready for

a certain profession requires a lot of time and specialized training, and thus the empowerment of employees gradually has found a special place in most businesses [1]. Human resource empowerment means creating the necessary capacity to enable them to create added value in the organization and play the role and responsibilities accepted in the organization with efficiency and effectiveness. Due to the high importance of empowering employees to increase productivity and job satisfaction in companies and institutions, the researchers have always sought to better measure and thus enhance empowerment of employees [2]. Empowerment of human resources is one of the effective tools for increasing the productivity and optimal use of individual and group capabilities in order to realize organizational goals. Since universities in each country are responsible

for moving forward for change, it is expected that faculty members who are considered to be the main pillars of the university will fulfill this important task. In order to achieve this, the faculty members of the Universities need to be empowered to improve their teaching/learning skills; for achieving this goal, they need special education and training to do competently their duty and role in building an empowered society [3]. Studies done in Iran have shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychological empowerment and some variables such as transformational leadership [4], new information technologies [5], career enthusiasm and entrepreneurship [6], original leadership [7], organizational behavior [7], creativity [8], Reduction of occupational stress [9], job satisfaction [10], management strategies and individual self-efficacy resources [11], emotional intelligence [12] and knowledge management [13]. A meta-analysis research in Iran showed that the effect of transformational leadership on psychological empowerment with an effect size of 0.6 was higher than the average. In addition, from between the dimensions of transformational leadership, the individual considerations and ideal influence have respectively the highest and the least impact on the psychological empowerment of employees in Iran with the effect sizes of 0.547 and 0.445 [4]. According to Sadri et al, the most important factor affecting the faculty members' empowerment in the department of dentistry of Islamic Azad University have been the provision of resources and facilities (related to education and research) at the workplace [14]. Abdolahi et al. in studying the factors affecting the empowerment of faculty members in the Tehran Teacher Training University showed that in the meaningfulness of the job, they are more capable than the other, dimensions of empowerment, and in the dimension of trust, they are at a lower level of ability [15]. In a study done at the University of Washington, Luna et al. showed that empowerment of faculty members has a direct relationship with their annual evaluation. The faculty members who are evaluated are more inclined to increase their abilities both in the individual and specialized field [16]. Mok et al. investigated the relationship between organizational atmosphere and nursing

empowerment research in Hong Kong, which concluded that teamwork has the most relevance with empowerment of nurses [17]. Shelton et al. showed that self-efficacy has the highest average among the components of variable of perceived empowerment [18]. In another study, Koberg et al. showed that in working groups with a supportive leader who encouraged group value and the effectiveness of the group, a greater sense of empowerment was achieved, and those employees who had supportive managers experienced greater effectiveness [19]. Studies show that education empowers faculty members and this empowerment is a process that prepares faculty members for playing different educational roles and strengthens them in order to be productive and up-to-date [20]. Jawahar Nesan et al. in a research showed that factors like employee empowerment and leadership style are related to the improvement of manpower productivity [21]. The results of the study of Mehrabian et al., entitled the identification of factors affecting human resource productivity from the point of view of clinical and non-clinical professors, showed that the employees' empowerment is the most important component of improving the productivity of manpower [22]. Performance in universities depends on many variables, among which the well-qualified and capable faculty members are of a particular position, and the faculty members' empowerment plays an essential role in promoting academic promotion and innovations. Nowadays, the faculty members' empowerment is an important component of medical education and its importance is increasing. In the past, it was assumed that a clinical scientist or one specialized in basic sciences is usually a good teacher or researcher, but today it is stressed that a preparation for the learning-teaching process is essential. The increasing pressure on the provision of services (in particular the clinical members of the faculty) along with the increasing complexity of medical science, as well as the emergence of new approaches in teaching and research, the time shortness of faculty members to accept different roles require the faculty members' empowerment; in this way with applying a wide range of different strategies, the different roles to be played are created. Entry into any educational institution is based on the

rules governing; the continuation of activities in that organization also requires recognition of the organizational rights and regulations and individual rights. Therefore, this research has investigated the psychological empowerment of faculty members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences in southwestern Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional descriptive research was conducted in 2018 at Dezful University of Medical Sciences in southwestern Iran. The statistical population of this research includes all 74 faculty members of this university. The questionnaires were distributed through a census sampling method. Finally, 43 of them completed the questionnaires. Inclusion criteria for participation in study include the membership of the respondent as a faculty member at Dezful University of Medical Sciences. Exclusion criteria include individual's non-consent for participation in the study. The data collection method was a questionnaire and the questionnaire was divided into two parts: demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational level, academic degree and service record) and the Spreitzer psychological empowerment questionnaire (PEQ). The questionnaire was built in 1995 on the basis of the empowerment model of Thomas Volthaus and consists of 12 items [2]; it measures and evaluates the four dimensions of psychological empowerment from the perspective of Spreitzer. These dimensions are: Meaningfulness (3 items) including the proportion between work requirements and beliefs, values and behavior. Feeling of competence (3 items) is actually a personal belief that a person feels he/she successfully accomplishes the assigned duties. The right to choose (3 items) is having a sense of choice right or autonomy in the sense of the freedom and the individual autonomy in determining the activities necessary to carry out his/her duties. Effectiveness (3 items) is the degree to which a person can influence the strategic, administrative, and operational results of the job. These questions have been developed and provided based on the Likert 5-option Spectrum (including "I Absolutely disagree" with Score 1, "I disagree" with Score 2, "I have no idea" with Score 3, "I Agree" with Score 4 and

"I Totally Agree" with Score 5); they have been evaluated according to the division of low (3-7), moderate (7-11) and high (11-15). Validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been proved in numerous studies done in Iran and internationally. Validity and reliability of this standard questionnaire were re-evaluated by the researchers and its reliability was evaluated 94% using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percent) and inferential statistics (independent t-test and analysis of variance) were used for data analysis and SPSS version 22.

RESULTS

Dezful University of Medical Sciences, located in southwestern Iran, was established in 2010. The university now has 74 faculty members. 43 members completed the questionnaires of this research. Their specifications have been shown in Table 1. According to Table 1, 22 (51.2%) people of them are women and 20 (46.5) people are men, 35 (81.4%) members are under 40 and 6 (13.9%) members are above 40 years old. 20 (46.5%) of them had MSc degrees and 20 (46.5%) had PhD degrees. 19 people of them (44.2%) had a work experience of less than 5 years, 13 (30.2%) of them with a work experience of 5-10 years and 8 (18.6%) individuals with work experience of 11-20 years. Academic degree of 23 (53.5%) members is instructor and 15 of them (34.9%) are assistant professors.

According to Table 2, the highest number of responses is in the field of effectiveness, "I agree" (48%), the highest number of responses in the meaningfulness dimension, "I agree" (43.4%), the highest number of responses in the sense of competence, "I agree completely" (62%) and the highest number of responses in the right to choose, "I totally agree" (53.5%).

According to Table 3, the variables such as education, academic rank, and the experience of faculty members had no significant effect on their empowerment ($P < 0.05$). However, gender ($P = 0.038$) and age ($P = 0.032$) of the faculty members had a significant effect on their empowerment score, and female faculty members and older faculty members were of

empowerment higher than younger faculty members ($P=0.019$).

According to Table 4, the mean score of the effectiveness areas (6.5 ± 2.4), the sense of competence (4.4 ± 1.6), and the right to choose

(4.4 ± 1.2) was low, but the mean score of the meaningfulness dimension (7.3 ± 7.3) was moderate.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research showed that the faculty members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences in southwest Iran had the highest score, among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, the meaningfulness, effectiveness, sense of competence and right to choose, respectively. According to the method of calculating the Spreitzer psychological empowerment questionnaire (PEQ), the areas of effectiveness, sense of competence, and right to choose were of low scores, but they were moderate in terms of meaningfulness. As mentioned, according to the results of the research, the faculty members of Dezful University of Medical Sciences had the highest scores in meaningfulness dimension (proportion between work requirements and beliefs, values and behaviors). This is consistent with the researches of Abdolahi *et al.* [15], AmirGhodsi *et al.* [23], Gholifar *et al.* [24] in Iran and Friend in the United States [25], as well as with that of Baker *et al.* [26]. Also, it is not consistent with the study done by Mehrabian *et al.* in Iran [13]. Abdolahi *et al.* studied the factors related to the empowerment of faculty members of Tehran Teacher Training University; they showed that in meaningfulness dimension of job, they are more capable compared to the other dimensions of empowerment and in the dimension of trust they are in lowest level of the capability [15]. Gholifar *et al.* have examined the psychological empowerment in Iranian colleges and concluded that professional skills and organizational culture have a significant

Table 1: Individual characteristics of faculty members

	Variable	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	20	46.5
	Female	22	51.2
	Incomplete information	1	2.3
Age	Under 40 years	35	81.4
	Over 40 years	6	13.9
	Incomplete information	2	4.7
Education	MSc	20	46.5
	PhD	20	46.5
	Incomplete information	3	7
Experience	<5	19	44.2
	5-10	13	30.2
	11-20	8	18.6
	Incomplete information	3	7
Degree	Instructor	23	53.5
	Assistant Professor	15	34.9
	Incomplete information	5	11.6

Table 2: Frequency of responses given to the four components of the questionnaire

	Variable	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	20	46.5
	Female	22	51.2
	Incomplete information	1	2.3
Age	Under 40 years	35	81.4
	Over 40 years	6	13.9
	Incomplete information	2	4.7
Education	MSc	20	46.5
	PhD	20	46.5
	Incomplete information	3	7
Experience	<5	19	44.2
	5-10	13	30.2
	11-20	8	18.6
	Incomplete information	3	7
Degree	Instructor	23	53.5
	Assistant Professor	15	34.9
	Incomplete information	5	11.6

Table 3: Investigating the impact of faculty members' individual characteristics on their empowerment score

	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Test	P
Gender	Male	20.9	4.9	Independent t	0.038
	Female	24.2	5.2		
Age	Under 40 years	23.1	5.3	Independent t	0.341
	Over 40 years	18.2	2.8		
Education	MSc	23.3	4.7	Independent t	0.032
	PhD	21.7	5.7		
Experience	<5	37.7	4.6	Analysis of variance	0.781
	5-10	23.1	5.6		
	11-20	20.2	5.9		
Degree	Instructor	22.9	4.6	Independent t	0.29
	Assistant professor	23.3	5.5		

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of empowerment components score

Components (range of score changes)	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Knowledge creation (7-35)	6.5	2.4	3	14
Preservation of knowledge (6-30)	7.3	2.7	3	15
Knowledge transfer (4-20)	4.4	1.6	3	9
Knowledge application (4-20)	4.4	1.2	3	7

impact on the faculty members' psychological ability [24]. In the study of AmirGhodsi et al. that was conducted among the employees of the National Iranian Oil Company of the central regions of Iran, the meaningfulness dimension was of the highest score [23]. Friend studied the empowerment among the faculty members of the Society of Nursing Colleges in the United States; he assessed as high the empowerment in the two groups under study, but the degree of managerial capability was higher. He also concluded that the empowered managers had a positive effect on employees' abilities [25]. Also, the result of the research of Baker et al. showed that there is a positive relationship between the intensity of psychological empowerment and job satisfaction, and the majority of employees feel power as a faculty member in their workplace [26]. The results of all these researches are consistent with ours. Also, Mehrabian et al. have evaluated to be low the meaningfulness dimension in the ability of the employees of the health center of Gilan province in northern Iran, which is not consistent with our research [13].

Also, other result of this research was that the individual variables such as education, academic rank and experience of faculty members did not affect their empowerment. Also, the results showed that female faculty members are more capable compared to the male faculty members; that is consistent with the research of Malik et al. in Pakistan [27] but does not conform to AmirGhodsi et al. research in Iran [23]. The older faculty members were more capable than younger faculty members.

Also, the faculty members of Dezfoul University of Medical Sciences in other dimensions of empowerment have given to themselves lower scores according to the calculation of the questionnaire scores, namely: Effectiveness (the degree to which a person can influence his/her strategic, administrative, and operational outcomes), the sense of competence (the person's belief that he/she feels to do successfully the

duties) and the right to choose (having the right to choose or autonomy in the sense of the freedom of action and independence of the individual in determining the activities necessary for his or her job tasks). That is in line with the results of the researches of Abdolahi et al [15], Mehrabian et al. [13] in Iran.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this research can play a fundamental role in the success of Iran's medical sciences universities and other universities and similar organizations. Therefore, it would appear that the following set of guidelines can be proposed: the reward system must be articulated based on performance. The rewards given to creativity, individual and collective initiative must be proportioned with individual needs and interests, individual differences, and types of internal and external rewards. By reducing the concentration and transfer of decision-making centers to the lower level of the organization, the reduction of ad hoc rules and regulations can lead to an organizational structure appropriate to empowerment programs. Organizational goals must be properly expressed; the ultimate end of the organization must be specified and implemented in such a way as to achieve coherently goals. In addition, in order to empower human resources, the managers must provide them with the necessary organizational information to carry out their duties. The delegation of powers increases the organizational strength and promotes the motivation of human resources. In this way, the sense of competence and effectiveness is strengthened in the employees. Meanwhile, one of the main pillars of empowerment is the formation of work teams, according to which the managers should take action of forming working groups instead of being adhered to the traditional hierarchy. Managers should give more freedom to the low-echelon human resources of the organization, so that they can make the

appropriate decisions, because the intense control by management prevents creativity and restricts flexibility and innovation. Modeling can lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of individual and organizational performance. In this regard, the managers' behaviors are taken as pattern by subordinates. Also, the managers can introduce the behavior of successful human resources to other employees as a model, and thus provide the possibility of strengthening the desired organizational behaviors. Also, the managers' saying the words of thanks to their employees and their attention to their physical and mental status will be helpful in creating a sense of meaning for the employees.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare there is no conflict.

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