

## Exploring the Role of Workplace Empowerment on Organizational Commitment of University Female Teaching Staff: Evidence from One Private University in Cambodia

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### ABSTRACT

This study was designed to explore the role of workplace empowerment on the organizational commitment of female teaching staff in the university by using the qualitative survey method. The sample of the study was selected by using a purposive sampling technique and it comprised of 10 female university teachers. Two interview protocols, one each for workplace empowerment and organizational commitment were used to collect the data and thematic analysis was applied to analyze the participants' interview transcripts. The results of the present study assist the prior research that workplace empowerment is the main contributor of organizational commitment. The results showed that teachers have a very little level of workplace empowerment as a result they were committed to a personal level of interest rather than that of organizational support. The study suggested that institutions should create an environment to enhance the perceptions of empowerment among employees that will positively influence them and it will eventually increase the institution's effectiveness and commitment.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The key component of any firm is its workforce, which consists of knowledgeable and driven individuals. Presenting improved feature services and value to increase organization completion is currently a major worry for organizations. If organizations care more about their workers, this would be feasible. Enhancing employees' abilities and productivity can help firms get the most out of their workforce (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian & Wilk, 2002). Organizations are now launching initiatives to raise worker performance. By continuing this endeavor, employees will experience a sense of empowerment that fosters a sense of community. Giving workers a sense of control over their jobs and getting their input on issues that impact them at work are two ways that organizations might succeed (Mullins, 2009). The important idea of empowerment is giving workers the freedom to choose their work objectives, make decisions, and handle problems inside their area of responsibility. Empowerment is a multifaceted notion that benefits both firms and employees by helping them gain control over their own lives and assisting them in their social lives. Employees have access to information, resources, opportunities, decision-making, institutional support, and the chance to learn and develop in an empowered work environment (Bateman & Snell, 2007). Employees that feel empowered can operate at a higher degree of effectiveness. These days, workplace empowerment—a common management concept—makes employees feel more independent, confident in their skills, and capable of having an impact on the company. When an organization provides its employees with autonomy, authority, control, and support to carry out their work-related obligations, this is known as empowerment. By attending to their requirements, workplace empowerment gives workers more motivation (Laschinger, Almost & Tuer-Hodes, 2003). It motivates staff members to work in a way that enables them to give the company the finest possible knowledge, skills, and professionalism. Workplace empowerment thrives in companies that recognize their employees' contributions and provide them with educational resources. Empowerment requires supervisors who are supportive and have faith in their staff (McShane, Glinow & Sharma, 2008). The notion of empowerment is wide-ranging. Research on workplace empowerment, whether conducted from an academic or corporate standpoint, consistently emphasizes the relationship between employees' dedication to their firm/institutions and empowerment. Research shows that employee empowerment at work significantly improves employee productivity and organizational services (Samat, Ramayah, & Saad, 2006). It fosters mutual understanding and trust between management and employees (Daft, 2008). According to another study, teachers who feel empowered at work are more committed to their organizations, which will undoubtedly benefit their professional lives (Dee, Alan, Henkin & Duemer, 2003). According to Robbins, Judge, and Sanghi (2010), workplace empowerment results in a dedicated staff that is extremely content working for their firm. When instructors in educational institutions have comfortable working environments, they are better able to improve their skills and cultivate a sense of loyalty to the institution, which will help them

progress in their careers as well (Dee et al., 2003). The literature on staff empowerment emphasizes that empowered individuals are more innovative, and valuable, and make up a highly devoted and loyal workforce. Employees' feelings of work involvement, loyalty, and trust in the company's standards are the foundations of organizational commitment, which is defined as their impact on the organization. Organizations should involve employees in decision-making, provide them with resources that will help them succeed, provide education, and offer meaningful rewards to foster commitment in their workforce (Daft, 2008). An employee with the highest level of organizational commitment has a clear understanding of both personal and corporate principles (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Employees can voice their concerns about the organization and its health through a continuous commitment process (Luthans, 2008). According to a 2014 study by Orgambídez-Ramos and Borrego-Alés, employee empowerment and job satisfaction are strongly correlated, with empowered workers being more devoted to and productive for the company. Their research demonstrated that progressive possibilities and an empowered work environment have a significant impact on organizational success. The primary causes of Cambodia's shortage of qualified and dedicated instructors in the teaching profession include heavy workloads, low pay, unfavorable working conditions, and a lack of financial incentives (Pich, 2017). Teachers are one of the most important components that play a big influence in the performance of institutes in a competitive environment, thus it is crucial to address this issue by improving the working environments and encouraging the younger generation to enter this profession with full devotion. According to this viewpoint, the study gives university administration proof of how worker empowerment raises organizational commitment. Thus, the administration of the university can implement several techniques to create an atmosphere that could strengthen instructors' dedication and yield highly qualified employees. Numerous studies on workplace empowerment in Cambodia have been conducted, however, they have all focused on different areas using a quantitative paradigm. Given that colleges operate in a dynamic and competitive environment, faculty personnel are among the most significant and essential components that contribute to the success of universities (Pich, 2017). It is vital to comprehend the purpose of workplace empowerment and investigate the perspectives of female university teachers regarding its operation. Therefore, to close that gap, the current study will look at the function that workplace empowerment plays as a requirement for the organizational commitment of female teaching staff in Cambodia's public universities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study aims to investigate the various facets of workplace empowerment, the various facets of organizational commitment, and the impact of workplace empowerment on the organizational commitment of female university teaching staff.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative survey approach to investigate the impact of workplace empowerment on female university teaching staff's organizational commitment. Participants in a qualitative survey are required to provide their answers to all open-ended questions about the subject (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is employed to investigate people's experiences and interpretations (Fink, 2003). This method helped the current study comprehend instructors' perspectives on organizational commitment and workplace empowerment. Female academic staff members from one Cambodian public institution made up the study's sample. Ten female teachers from five departments—two from each—make up the study's sample, which was chosen through the use of the purposive sampling technique. From the registrar's office, a list of female teachers with more than five years of experience was acquired. The interview schedule was created to gather data, and the selected participants' experience ranged from 5 to 10 years. Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. The interviews were conducted by using theme analysis, the researchers turned the audio recordings of the interviews into a written text. The opinions expressed by the participants are embodied in their words. Transcribing a single 30- to 45-minute taped interview takes roughly 4 to 6 hours. The researchers bracket the intriguing responses after transcribing the data. In interview transcription, bracketing the data is done to reduce and mold the information into a format that can be seen. Subsequently, categories were created since they serve as the primary means of organizing the text's essential elements. The main themes of the text include, for instance, the section on teacher workplace empowerment, opportunities, support, information, and decision-making participation. To find themes within the categories, the researcher examined them. After the researcher has analyzed all of the data, themes aid in the interpretation of descriptive data.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Employee confidence and a sense of importance inside the institution are increased through the process of power sharing. Employees will come up with more creative ideas and be more committed to achieving the organization's goals as a result of these efforts. The study offers corroborated evidence about the strong correlation between worker empowerment and organizational commitment. The portion that followed covered workplace empowerment and organizational commitment, each with its unique aspects.

### **Echelon of Professional Development**

Employees who are empowered at work benefit both the company and themselves. According to Blanchard (2001), employees who have been given more authority at work are responding with responsibility, excitement, and their utmost efforts towards the company. The importance of establishing an environment that may help workers finish their tasks quickly has been highlighted by the study. Sharing and distributing authority is always viewed as a question of ego and self-respect, even at the local level, in Cambodia, much as in other developing nations. According to the study's instructors, universities

typically offer seminars, workshops, and training sessions, but these aren't useful for developing real professional abilities. They claim that there is no chance for them to be awarded a scholarship. The bulk of this training is knowledge-based, with relatively few skill-related training, as one of the female participants put it. Additionally, instructors disclosed that the majority of the training was arranged by the institution without their approval. This is why the needs of the teachers are not met by these trainings, and their interviews also supported this. "Organization staff received extensive feedback after each training workshop with suggestions for improving training next time," stated one participant, "but these suggestions were never reflected in their next training programs." For an employee's professional growth and career advancement, these possibilities are crucial. Therefore, the institution must provide staff members with the necessary authority to carry out their jobs and include them in information procedures, organizational structure, and critical training for making decisions and solving problems. According to Pearson and Moomaw (2005), an empowered teacher is better suited and more capable of resolving the issues facing today's institutions. Empowering staff members is also a key success factor for organizations.

### **Awareness about Organization**

Every organization has channels for both official and informal communication. However timely and accurate official communication is essential to the organization's efficacy. Formal communication in universities typically occurs both upward and downward (from the Vice Dean and Registrar's office to the department, and vice versa). The results showed that most teachers complained about having limited access to information and having to rely on unofficial channels of contact to learn about their organization. Teachers believe that this information is crucial to their work, hence they should have access to it. Because the national assembly enacted the measure, information access became a right. "I have no easy access to information if I want to get some information then I have to put my efforts and people in the offices usually resist giving information," said the opinion of one participant.

The results showed that teachers only knew the fundamental requirements for promotion. They added that they only knew their departmental colleagues and were unfamiliar with university teachers as a whole. To exchange resources and expertise, educators desire to stay in touch with their university colleagues. They all stress the necessity of having a body or shared platform where they may establish connections and a line of contact with their coworkers. Laschinger and Finegan (2004) claim that empowered employees are more equipped to cultivate positive relationships with both management and colleagues, hence reducing grievances and advancing the provision of high-quality services.

## **Support**

According to the interviews conducted for this study, the majority of the support that teachers receive is emotional and is given in the context of personal relationships. In terms of their issues and during difficult situations, none of the teachers mentioned receiving any form of organizational help. The university lacked an organizational support system. Although it was acknowledged by the department head that occasionally they receive support in the form of flexible scheduling, there was no formal support system. Literature has stated that teachers' dedication will increase and they will become more competitive if they receive support and career direction from their colleagues and the head of the department. Organizational policies and encouraging managerial conduct are more likely to encourage employees' more active involvement in organizational efforts, according to Ramus (2002). It demonstrated that employees will participate in the advancement and efficacy of the institutions if they receive support (Chelladurai, 2006). The aforementioned results align with the commonly held belief in the literature that employees who possess the ability to personally organize their tasks and operate within boundaries are more dedicated, competitive, and productive.

## **Availability of Resources**

Teachers struggle to obtain any kind of resource because it is concentrated within the university. According to the majority of participants, the university is having difficulties and does not have adequate resources. The study's conclusion showed that the treasurer's office centralized all of the financial resources and distributed them to the departments while considering the needs of the departments. Some educators noted that while the head of the department assigns money for supplies like books and equipment, most decisions are made at the central level. Tangible resources are deficient, like as equipment and books, as well as in physical infrastructure. Nonetheless, the few resources and equipment that are available to them (teachers) are under their department's purview. The state of the institute's physical structure is concerning. The communal staff room is utilized by even senior faculty. The most common complaint from teachers was that they lacked a distinct workspace. In response, a participant said, "University still struggling to find all these sources. Our space is limited, not just for sitting but also for conducting study. We must sit in a combined office that lacks a suitable research environment."

## **Participation in Decision**

The current study's results also show that although teachers were frequently asked for their opinions on issues about their tasks, such opinions were not always taken into account. The majority of educators stated that since policy decisions are made centrally, they are not involved in making them. Again, the head of the department has the last say in all decision-making, but there was a limit on departmental decisions. Another participant expressed her opinion, saying, "We are typically asked to make suggestions in departmental

meetings, but those suggestions are either not implemented or depend on the head of the department."

### **Organizational Commitment**

Examining the various facets of female teaching staff's organizational commitment was one of the study's other goals. Because the majority of the study's participants were graduates of the institution, the findings reveal that most lecturers had a strong commitment to the institution. They've been associated with it for a long time. However, some educators have little affiliation with the university and are prepared to leave if they can receive more benefits at another institution. The majority of teachers believe that although they began their careers out of passion, they now see their jobs as necessary evils. "Yes, it's a matter of necessity that I support my family, and kids' education, and even my desires are being satisfied with this job," said one female respondent. "If I left this organization, my family setup may get disturbed," said one participant. The only reason the teachers displayed their lack of devotion was for their gain. "It depends on the nature of the job," said one reply. I will leave this career if another position better suits my goals, interests, and circumstances. The current study's findings demonstrated that workplace empowerment has a major impact on organizational commitment. The institute can fulfill its organizational purpose by promoting individuality, innovation, and problem-solving through candid, open communication among all staff members in a safe atmosphere. Workers with empowerment are constantly proud of the job they do (Ahmed, Salih & Khan, 2011). Therefore, an increase in the conditions of empowerment will increase organizational commitment. Essentially, organizational commitment is what leads workers to create an emotional attachment to the company, a desire to contribute to its successes, and an improvement in their job performance (Locke, 2009). Employees who are empowered in the workplace possess the knowledge, abilities, and self-assurance needed to achieve both personal and professional success (William, 2005).

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teachers are inspired to work with greater dedication and loyalty when they are empowered in the workplace, which raises organizational commitment levels. According to the study's findings, teachers' performance can be enhanced by having access to professional development opportunities at work, receiving support from supervisors and peers, ensuring that resources are available to meet their needs, and being involved in decision-making, which inspires staff to work extremely hard. Teachers at institutions must have essential autonomy at work to do their jobs successfully, and this should be recognized by the organization. The actions listed below can be implemented in light of this study to enhance university instructors' workplace empowerment and make better use of their skills in this area.

The university may be fostering a favorable atmosphere in which staff members have access to knowledge, opportunities for professional growth, top-

level management support, resources available, and the capacity to participate in decision-making. The government also takes the initiative to create policies that empower teachers, who then work for the good of the nation as a whole. A country's foundation is its education system. What will become of that country if the teachers who form its backbone are not provided with sufficient resources, support, and opportunities for professional growth in their line of work? Therefore, the university needs to be more concerned about the working circumstances of their teachers and endeavor to find the best ways to increase their level of commitment to their jobs. Teachers will be invigorated by it, and they will be fully committed to strengthening the country.

#### **FURTHER STUDY**

This research still has limitations so further research needs to be done on this topic “Exploring the Role of Workplace Empowerment on Organizational Commitment of University Female Teaching Staff: Evidence from One Private University in Cambodia”.

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