A Study of the Relationship between Empowerment and Organizational Learning among Employees of Gas Transmission Company

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ABSTRACT: The present research investigated the relationship between empowerment and organizational learning among employees of Gas Transmission Company. The research was a correlational, descriptive field study. The research population included 240 tenure staff, out of whom 145 were sampled randomly. A questionnaire, based on Spritzer's Psychological Empowerment questionnaire and Mishra's, was used, totalling to 18 items. For organizational learning, Niphe's questionnaire with 31 items was used. The reliability of instruments was approved by Cronbach's alphas of %807 for empowerment and %796 for organizational learning. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between empowerment and organizational learning (r=%481). Each dimensions of empowerment was significantly related, the highest (r=%578) belonging to the trust dimension.
Key words: Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Learning, Gas Transmission Company

INTRODUCTION

Organizations in the field of competition in business and world work environment required to good react opposite of the changes continued or are eliminated. The world of business is passing from the dominance of capital into the superiority of knowledge. An organizations to outreach to other organizations need to develop the human resources and to increase the amount of information and knowledge available. Staff and the knowledge that there is in the head of them are a very valuable resource for the organization. Knowledge and know-how strategic resource of organizations must be managed and nurtured. Hence, organizational learning and knowledge creation over the last few years have been considered [1].

Although the debate over the importance of organizational learning has been developed over the last decade, but this is not a new concept. Argris over forty years has been proposed issues about it. However, no doubt that interest in the concept of organizational learning or learner organization has been increased substantially since the 1990s. Two factors that really seems to have resulted addressed organizational learning are as follows: 1) the rate of change 2) increase of competitive pressures, which both have grown by globalization. Bashel and Probest in explaining organizational learning have said:

Organizational learning provides a different paradigm in which systems change and thus allows us to redefine our society and economy. As well as the situations and perceptions of individuals have changed, the existing mental impressions lose their events and dependencies and emerge a new form of ideas. But he said that "organizational learning is a new intellectual framework that the system will change by it" that is a spicy and bold claim that seems to be common among the most influential writers.

Four joint statement that underpins the concept of organizational learning include:

1) In order to survive, organizations must learn quickly to environmental changes. Means the ability of an organization to adapt to changes in its environment depends on the organization's ability to learn.

2) The extent to which an organization needs to move from the traditional learning into organizational learning depends on the degree of instability (change) of the environment.

3) In the past, preserving the union and adaptations to the organization was the responsibility for the organization's senior executives. But now the environment is changing so fast that it was beyond the ability of a small number of managerial elite who change with necessary changes.

4) All of the work force should be shared in the process of identifying the need for change and its implementation. This requires that they share to learn, of course if the organization wants to commit to the environment and to keep pace.

On the other hand in the today's business, a lot of emphasis on intangible assets such as brand, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and capital are substitutes. These key resources capable to be considered organization as an ideal, regardless of industry. Such organizations are focused on people and only after putting the right people in appropriate posts steps in order to outshine their competitors. A more sophisticated research suggests that to achieve success not only have to put the right people in the right posts, but must identify top brokers for each organizational poats , these studies claim that people who drive the organization toward the future, even are more important than the strategy and vision of the organization [2]. In some countries, labor markets are faced with a lack of effective forces. Since it is getting harder to find replacements for employees, organizations prefer retain their valuable employees. Empowering employees to change and stability of the main characteristics of today's business environment it is essential. Empowerment of the workforce is used as a new industrial mechanisms toward local and international threats [3]. A review of the management literature suggests that empowerment as an important topic fabricated wide attention in management functions for which can be outlined the various reasons. First, individual empowerment is the basic elements of managerial and organizational effectiveness, and that each time that power and control are shared, thereby effectiveness is increased. Another reason which a lot of studies have dealt with is that empowerment is facilitator factor in response to suitable environmental changes. Third, increasing interest in empowering is benefits results it which has and in several of the studies mentioned the increase in sales and profits, lower costs, greater customer satisfaction, increased loyalty to the organization, improvement on the effectiveness, efficiency in solving problems and improving the coordination of the tasks. Empowerment by fostering of motivated and able employees give the ability to managers to act quickly and effectively toward the dynamics of the competitive environment and cause to provide competing superiority of them. Broadly changes in the economic environment, caused by globalization and technology have forced organizations to transform themselves in order to survive in the new economy and the new world. Organizations with high intelligence and ability for learning are transformed quickly to world leaders, and organizations with a poor compatible in the environment full of pace and information of the new era will not undergo. Therefore for an organization can to adapt to these widely changes should be prepared to change. Today global challenges associated with change is learning how the organizations and staff can change faster than variable business conditions and gain competitive positioning. So despite today's dynamic changes, learner organizations have the ability to maintain and development. Maybe infer importance of the issue leads now is further increased the ability to adapt to changes by learning on both individual and organizational level [4].

On the other hand, the environmental challenges of the present era in terms of rapid technological progress, increased customer expectations, and the need for flexibility, have necessitate the organization to find ways to sustain their survival. Meanwhile, many organizations have recognize the solutions to enhance organizational learning and implement empowerment programs and by implementing these programs and using learning and empowerment of the individual have attempted to overcome the internal and external barriers while modifying variables that influence people feel, and to create techniques for fostering employee empowerment [5]. Bowen et al. [6] believes that empowerment is frontline employees to participate in the four elements of information, knowledge and power and testimonial. Fry believes that empowerment is distribution of decision-making power to people who have not it. Smith [7] believes that empowerment is encouraging individuals to greater participation in decisions that would have an impact on their activities. By this way we can provide opportunities for a person to they show can to create a good idea and actualize it. Han et al. [8] as follows from the definition of empowerment, being merit explains potential power that individuals should have to the effective actions which improve performance. As well as to define empowerment the influence states the merit of the act. Course, any organization will match the definition with itself needs and culture. However, it is essential that a clear relationship is maintained between empowerment, influence based on competence and continuous improvement. The definition provides the foundation of understanding and communicating of the concept of empowerment. Each element in the empowerment model as achievements, goals, strategies, and monitoring of empowerment helps to development and understanding of empowerment.

In academic resources, empowerment is introduced as rational, motivational and an extra motivational structure. Well as Richard Katio in reviewing the history categorizes empowerment into two psychological - political empowerment and psychological -symbolic empowerment. Rahimian [9] provides a five-stage model for the empowerment of human resources that include: soul powerful, physical health increase knowledge modifies attitudes, and behavior modification. However, most experts have been classified empowerment to two aspects of relational and psychological that the full description of each of them will be discussed as following:

Relational approach is defined as a top-down approach and a machine and shows a person's power and its pure dependency in relation to others. On this basis, employing new processes and distribution of power lead to empowering employees. In fact, full enablement of individuals means to give power or authority (moral or legal). Thus full enablement of individuals is required to examine the role of managers or leaders.

Theorists of psychological approach, which is headed by Thomas and Velthouss believe empowerment is a multifaceted issue and cannot be examined solely based on a particular concept, they believe that empowerment is the process of increasing intrinsic motivation tasks assigned to employees and are reflected in a series of the below cognitive traits:

- Be effective: one is to believe that by doing his job duties could have an important role to achieve the goals set.

- Competence: Competence is defined as the individual's belief in his ability to perform successfully the duties assigned.

- Significant: If the person performs the task which treats "valuable", it task has a significant feature.

- The right to choose: the duty refers to employees' freedom in defining the activities necessary to perform job duties [10].

Everyone on the promise that organizational learning is a complex and multidimensional concept. Because of the interdisciplinary concept of organizational learning, finding a definition widely accepted is difficult. But as Senge is pointed out almost all proposed definitions include two types of the "cognitive" and "behavioral". Fayol and Laylz [11] believe organizational learning of the process of improving actions is through better knowledge and more effective understanding.

Organizational learning and learner organization

Tsang , Organizational learning means learning by individuals and groups within the organization and organizational learning means organization learning the as a whole system, in other words, a learning organization is the result of organizational learning. Organizational learning is used to describe certain types of activities that flow in the organization, while the organizational learning refers to a particular type of organization. Organizational learning is considered as an internal process of the organization, which is learner organization is result of organizational learning. The Marquardt [12] suggests that in a learner organization focus is on what and in these systems, principles and characteristics of organizations that learn as a collective identity and act to produce, are checked, but the learning organization refers to how to learn the skills and process of making and using of knowledge. Within the concept of organizational learning is only considered as one dimension or element of a learner organization. Organizational learning is centralized based on observation and analysis of the existence processes in collective and individuals learning of organization, but learner organization has a practical way and is motivated by assessment or pathology tools helps to determine, develop and evaluate the quality of learning processes within the organization. Young et al. [13], learner organization is where organizational learning occurs in it and the process of production and the acquisition of knowledge starts from individual level and reaches to the organizational level. Organizational learning is defined as a continuous creative process through culinary of new knowledge that at all levels of the organization such individual, group and organizational is interacted, in other words, the heart of a learner organization is knowledge management that is defined as the process of facilitating organizational learning in a learner organization.

Literature

Orhan Comlek et al. [14] in a study assess the potential impact of organizational learning on innovation performance. Population of study was 199 middle and senior managers of 107 operating companies in the metal industry of Marmara region in Turkish. The results showed two dimensions of capacity for organizational learning (system orientation and profits diagnosis and acquisition of knowledge) positively affect innovation performance. Guerdat [15] in a study suggested testing the relationship between learner organization and the ethical atmosphere. Primary objective of this study was whether there is a significant relationship between two dimensions of the learner organization (relationship of organization with the environment, providing leadership strategic for learning), and the vision of employees towards ethical atmosphere of the organization or not? Results showed that while there was no experimental significance relationship between ethical climate dimensions and learner organization, both the concept of ethical climate and learning in the organizations have understood each partnership development exclusively. Results also found that due to the effective nature of ethical atmospheres perceived in organizational outcomes, it is necessary when the organizational systems are developed for continuous learning and strategic changes, ethical atmospheres are considered. Yan Sun Park [13] examines the impact of organizational learning culture, learning and performance goal orientation, managerial effectiveness, and psychological empowerment on employee learning in the workplace. The main question of research was: "How organizational learning culture, orientation ideal performance and learning, managerial effectiveness and psychological empowerment impact on employee's learning in the workplace?"

In this study, 600 Korean employees had participated who had a history of more than a year and were not in management position, and 382 questionnaires were completed and gathered, and, after that 17 questionnaires was diagnosed unusable, 61% of the questionnaires (365) were examined and the result was as follows:

- Organizational learning culture, learning ideal orientation, managerial effectiveness, and psychological empowerment is positively associated with learning at the workplace. Especially psychological empowerment was the strongest correlation with learning in the workplace.

- Organizational learning culture had a greater impact on managerial effectiveness and psychological empowerment compared with the learning and performance ideal orientation.

- Performance ideal orientation was not significantly related to managerial effectiveness and significantly associated with psychological empowerment.

Veeranuch [16] with a focus on the relationship between supervisors and subordinates investigate the relationship between the seven exogenous variables (empathy supervisors with subordinates, supervisors trusted subordinates, planning and submission instructions, agree to unity subordinates, supervisors sensitivity towards subordinates, the subordinate-centered learning process, head-centered learning process) and two internal variables (job satisfaction of employees and employees' intention to stay in the company), the population was 530 employees of Thai, the results of statistical analysis showed that three of the seven features of supervisors (supervisors and subordinates empathy, trust supervisors to subordinates, supervisors sensitivity toward subordinates) both directly and indirectly affect employees' intention to remain in company. Sensitivity of supervisors towards subordinates was found direct forecast of the employees' intention to remain in the company. Well as empathy of supervisors toward subordinates and supervisors' trust toward subordinate were introduced as the direct predictors through job satisfaction of the staff and their intention to remain in the company.

Elena [17] in a study entitled the role of ethnic identity on participatory processes that facilitate psychological empowerment among urban youth, discussed and analyzed development and test of a path model for predicting psychological empowerment of urban youth (ages between 13 to 17). To test the model, data of the study gained from urban youth in a town at the northernmost part of the United States. Variables that were used in the model are: the perceived proximity issues, community sense of proximity, community support, participation in school activities and community, and ethnic identity. Using structural equation of modeling, data - of the study was analyzed. To determine whether the hypothesized model is appropriate? And how the five-factor predictor can be influence a personal level of psychological empowerment, as measured by the scale of social and political control? The results showed that the assumed model provides a merit good for data form all participants' samples and determines the differences in the models for ladies and gentlemen. A key findings of the study was political role of ethnic identity as the strongest predictive factor of Psychological empowerment process.

Skerlovaj et al ., in research on organizational learning culture (OLC), missing organizational learning ring of organizational learning between the process variable of income and organizational performance, concluded that organizational learning culture has a positive and direct impact on all three aspects of organizational learning performance of non-revenue organization (Empowerment, customer, and the seller). Impact of organizational learning culture on performance of the organization's income, was positively but indirect.

Thomas and Taymon in a study entitled empowerment is used always: the role perceived of intrinsic motivation and personal interpretation, using a framework of intrinsic motivation, found that employees have a choice about how to do their jobs, have a better performance compared to those who have less job autonomy [18].

Fry et al. studied on organizational learning in the general schools environment. They while implementation of school success profile of schools- organizational learning, pointed out the impact of the implementation of organizational learning programs in empowerment of general schools of United State of America. Nashinger and Manoylovich in a study entitled "The relationship between empowerment, characteristics of selected personality and job satisfaction" reported the information to better understand the determinant factors of job satisfaction for nurses in the hospital. The study included 347 nurses in all the expert fields. Theoretical framework used in this study included the Conter's theory about structural empowerment and Speritzer's theory about psychological empowerment. Results showed that structural and psychological empowerment predict 28% of the variance in job satisfaction. The overall conclusion of the study was that both factors of the working environment and personal factors can contribute to job satisfaction (cited in Bowen, 2006).

Skinner [19] in a study entitled empowering relationship between the empowering behavior of managers (supervisors) and a sense of empowerment of subordinates with the leader - follower (LMX) relational factors as a potential modulator, examine whether leaders' empowering behavior forecast a sense of empowerment of subordinates or no. Additionally, this study examined whether the relationship of leader - follower affect relationship between empowering behavior of leadership and sense of empowerment of subordinates. Within the study, sample was taken from the two organizations, including 21 managers and 113 were subordinates. As it is shown in the hypothesis of study, the leader empowering behavior predicted a sense of empowerment to subordinates. Moreover, the results showed that LMX positively associated with a sense of empowerment subordinates, but did not act as a moderating factor.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The method used is descriptive. The population consists of all managers and staff of Tehran Gas Transmission Company, which were 240 people. Sample size was selected 140 people using the Karschi and Morgan's formula and for sampling random method has been used.

Materials: for data gathering two questionnaires of empowerment and organizational learning were used. The psychological empowerment questionnaire contains 18 questions that for measuring four first dimensions (significant, competence, the right of choice, effectiveness), the Spritzer's [10] psychological questionnaire and for assessing the trust dimension the Mishra's (1994) questionnaire were used. To measure

organizational learning, Niphe's questionnaire, which contains 31 items on a Likert scale was used. To determine the validity of questionnaires, the related experts' views have been used. For reliability of the questionnaires, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questionnaires of empowerment and for the organizational learning questionnaire Obtained 0.807 and 0.796, respectively.

Methods of data analysis: in this study to analyze the raw data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In information processing and testing hypotheses with regard to that subject of the research is related to determine the relationship between two variables, the Pearson and Spearman correlation test has been used.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, 68.6% of samples (96) were men and 31.4% (44) were female. Besides the above table revealed that 12% (n = 17) participants were high school graduates, 12% (n = 17) with associate degree, 61.4% (n = 86) with the degree of bachelor and 14.3% (n = 20) were MS who is clear that more than half participants were bachelor and in terms of service in the enterprise, data of table indicates that 31.4% of the subjects (n=44) between 1 to 5 years of service, 24.3% (n = 34) between 5-10 years of service, 17% (n = 24) between 10-15 years and about 4% (n = 6) between 20-15 years, 11.4% (n= 16) between 20-25 years and 11.4% (n = 16) had between 30-25 years of service in the company.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of samples in terms of the demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Status	Number	Percent
Sex	Man	96	68.6%
	Woman	44	31.4%
Education	Diploma	17	12.1%
	Associate degree	17	12.1%
	Bachelor	86	61.4%
	MS	20	14.3%
Years of service	1-5 years	44	31.4%
	5-10 years	34	24.3%
	10-15 years	24	17.1%
	15-20 years	6	04.3%
	20-25 years	16	11.4%
	25-30 years	16	11.4%

Table 2. descriptive results of variables of psychological empowerment and organizational learning

Variables of research	Average	The standard error of the mean	SD	Variance
Sense of job meaningful	12.66	0.182	2.152	4.630
Sense of competency in job	20.06	0.238	2.820	7.954
Sense of having a choice	11.90	0.192	2.274	5.170
Sense of be effectiveness	11.91	0.221	2.594	6.728
Sense of trust in colleagues	12.96	0.292	3.456	11.941
Psychological empowerment	67.40	0.926	10.882	118.417
Shared vision	11.46	0.268	3.172	10.063
Organizational Culture	11.33	0.302	3.552	12.618
Sharing Work and learning	11.43	0.242	2.841	8.071
sharing Knowledge	10.45	0.299	3.537	12.508
Systematic thinking	10.47	0.284	3.355	11.258
Collaborative Leadership	13.21	0.386	4.569	20.875
Development of competencies	16.79	0.430	5.083	25.839
Organizational Learning	85.16	1.855	21.790	474.821

Table 2 shows the average of five dimensions of psychological empowerment among employees of Gas Transmission Company in three significant dimensions the right of choice and being effective has been described about 12. While in the empowerment questionnaire to each of three dimensions 3 questions assigned. According to Likert (strongly agree, agree, etc. completely disagree) that has been scored from 5 to 1, respectively, the maximum score that can be assigned to one dimension is 25. In this study, considering that average of three dimensions has been evaluated 12 approximately, so it can be said that most of their answer have evaluated "Agree" (because if average score (12) is divided into three questions of each dimension, for each question 4 options granted that represents the "Agree" on the Likert) and average of dimension of competence has been described 20 and since the five questions in this post are dedicated to the dimension granted, a score of 4 gives to the dimension and indicates the option " agree" and about dimension of trust with respect to the mean of 12 and a total of four questions are dedicated to the dimension, now, if the score of 12 divided by 3, number 3 represents "somewhat" is obtained, and indicates the trust dimension among employees has a relative position. As well, in respect to variable of organizational learning and its seven dimensions, data of table also indicates that employees

of Gas Transferring Company from the maximum score that could be given to their organizational learning (155), dedicate a score of 85.15 that is equal to 55 percent of it. This is true for all seven subscales of organizational learning. That is, given five options Likert (strongly agree, agree, somewhat disagree, completely disagree) all samples options have chosen "somewhat" and this indicates that component of organizational learning in the company is away from ideal.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between empowerment and its components and organizational learning.

Variables	Organizational Learning	Shared vision	Organizational Culture	Organizational Work and Learning	Knowledge sharing	Systematic thinking	Collaborative Leadership	Development of competencies
Psychological empowerment	**0.481	**0.481	**0 .536	**0 .306	**0 .399	**0.282	**0.453	**0.421
Sense of job meaningful	*0.187	**0.222	**0.247	0.151	0.115	0.076	*0.213	* 0.197.
Sense of competency in job	**0.277	**0.309	**0.304	*0.173	**0.244	0.076	**0.291	** 0.291
Sense of having a choice	**0.442	**0.369	**0.510	**0.254	**0.333	**0.252	**0.434	** .399
Sense of be effectiveness	**0.451	**0.398	**0.496	**0.326	**0.404	**0.292	**0.342	**0.395
Sense of trust in colleagues	**0.578	**0.578	**0.556	**0.352	**0.447	**0.456	**0.552	** 0.423

Note: Correlation coefficients marked with (*) at level (0.05) and coefficients marked with (**) at level (0.01) are significant.

Table 3 shows Spearman's correlation coefficients between psychological empowerment and organizational learning. As it can be observed there is a high positive correlation to extent of 0.99 at significance level (0.01) between these variables, which means to approve original hypothesis and to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, with 99% confidence it can be said there is strong, direct and positive relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational learning among employees of Gas Transmission Company. Well above table shows correlation coefficients between significance variables of job and subscales of organizational learning. As can be observed, with 95% confidence (due to the 0.05 level) it can be said there is a direct and positive relationship between significant of job and organizational learning of company. Therefore, the hypothesis has been approved and the null hypothesis is rejected, the data in this table also show a positive and significant relationship between occupation significant component and subscales of "shared vision", "organizational culture" at the significance level (0.01) and "participative leadership", "develop competencies" at level (0.05). Based on the data in Table 3 it can be said that there is a strong and meaningful relationship at the significance level (0.01) between the sense of job competence and organizational learning variable. Therefore, the second sub-hypothesis is approved and the null hypothesis is rejected. The data in this table also shows significant and positive correlation at significant level (0.01) between the component of "professional competence" and the subscales of "shared vision", "organizational culture", " knowledge sharing ", "participative leadership", "development of qualifications". It also the component has a significant relationship with the sub-scale of "work and organizational learning" at level (0.05). Also, with 99 percent confidence (according to the significance level 0.01) can be said there is a positive and direct relationship between the feeling of having right of a choice and employees' sense of trust together and organizational learning of company. This hypothesis has been confirmed and the null hypothesis is rejected. Interestingly, the data in this table also show a positive and significant relationship between these three components and all of subscales a of organizational learning at significant level (0.01).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Today, organizations around the world because of their applications, need to learn to work faster, less expensive and more effective. Hence, the active presence in the field of competition and technology and the emergence of new jobs and the need for multi-skilled employees, empowering them is inevitable. Empowerment is a process that with giving greater autonomy to their employees and sharing them into information, which inhibits factors that affect job performance. Empowerment makes the conditions that weaken the employees and the organization has been around and increases feel incompetent staff, boosting innovation and creativity and determination and perseverance of employees and the terms to overcome the difficulties that can be take over faces are provided. Through empowerment, executives trust to the ability of employees to perform their duties at a higher level of confidence. This issue is examined in this paper. Hence, in this study examines the relationship between psychological empowerment in the form of five components (a sense of meaningful of job, a sense of competence in the jobs, a feeling of having a right of choice, and sense of trust to contributors) and organizational learning in the form of a seven-components (shared vision, organizational culture, organizational work and learning, knowledge sharing, systems thinking, collaborative leadership, and the development of competencies) were measured. Research findings indicate that there is a strong, direct and positive relationship between the

psychological empowerment and organizational learning (main hypothesis) with 99% confidence. The results of the second hypothesis suggests that with the 95 percent confidence there is a positive and direct relationship between the sense of a meaningful of job and organizational learning of employees of Gas Transmission Company. In regard to the second, third, fourth and fifth hypothesis the result can be obtained that with 99 percent confidence there is a strong, positive and direct relationship between a sense of competence on the job, the feeling of having a right of choice, a sense of being effectiveness and trust to collaborators and organizational learning. Meanwhile, according to the corporate status in terms of the components of empowerment and organizational learning should be pointed out that the rate of ability of the Gas Transmission Company employees was measured that based on analysis of data and the results obtained from Gas Transmission Company employees have necessary ability and in staff of the company there are factors of a sense of meaningful of job, a sense of competence, a sense of having right of a choice in matters, a sense of being effectiveness and a sense of confidence to collaborators and among the factors highest level is for a sense of competency and the lowest ranking is for the feeling of being effectiveness on a job, in the affairs and then the feeling of having right of a choice. Also, position of the Gas Transmission Company in terms of organizational learning was assessed that based on the data analysis and the results obtained there is a gap between the ideal situation of organizational learning and corporate present status, and among the seven-fold factors, prospect of organizational learning then organizational culture have the lowest ranking and the need to revise it further. Of course the status of the other components of organizational learning is also not satisfactory. Findings the research is consistent with the results [10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 20].

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