

Organizational Culture Impact on Psychological Empowerment of Academic Staff

Kseanela SOTIROFSKI*

Abstract

The main aim of this study is to examine the dimensions that have impact to the psychological empowerment academic staff in Albanian universities. Despite the factors like professional growth, self-efficacy, and decision making we especially get focused on the organizational culture thinking that it can have a powerful influence on the psychological empowerment, because it describes the link between contextual factors and employees' work behaviors. The research question of this study is: Which type of culture is needed in a university that improves academic staff to get empowered? This study aimed to examine the relationship between organizational culture and psychological empowerment of academicians in university `Aleksander Moisiu` in Albania.

A total of 46 interviews are made with the academic staff.

Results of the study showed that organizational culture have a great impact on the psychological empowerment of academicians and its dimensions. The dominant culture in research universities was hierarchy culture, while the strongest predictor of psychological empowerment was clan culture.

Keywords: organizational culture, psychological empowerment, university.

1. Introduction

Organizational culture is one of the most important elements which can influence organizational success. Organizational researchers and managers have examined the concept of culture in a variety of settings in order to develop more consistency and productivity in the workplace (Fralinger & Olson, 2007). There have been so many definitions provided for organizational culture. Schein, one of the most outstanding theorists of organizational culture, manifested the following very general definition. According to Schein (1984), organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Culture formation process begins with a leader or a founder proposing courses of actions and as

*University `Aleksander Moisiu`, Durres, Faculty of Education, Durres, Albania

these continue to be successful in solving group's internal and external problems, they come to be taken for granted and the assumptions underlying them cease to be questioned and debated.

There is a lack of literature about the relationship between universities organizational culture and academicians' psychological empowerment

Teaching, academic qualifications, research, community service and administrative work are the major tasks of academicians in universities in the globalization era. Making academicians' career more attractive requires enough consideration on their empowerment (George, Quillen, & Milner, 2006, Meyer, 2005; Strazzeri, 2005).

Academicians' empowerment is one of the most effective ways to improve employee motivation, organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and performance (Wang & Lee, 2009). Empowerment develops professional growth in abilities and skills, self-efficacy and performance and decreases turnover of employees (Biron & Bamberger, 2010). Related research claims that organizational culture facilitates empowerment (Johnson, 2009).

Developed countries provide strategies and conditions that improve the performance and empowerment of academic staff (Henkin & Marchiori, 2003). But, in developing countries like Albania, still the concepts like psychological empowerment are not a known concept at least in record to university procedures.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between organizational culture and psychological empowerment in Albanian universities. The research questions of this study are as follows: 1) What is the dominant organizational culture among lecturers in UAMD? 2) Is there any relationship between organizational culture and academicians' psychological empowerment? 3) Which type of organizational culture is a best improver of psychological empowerment dimensions?

2. Conceptual Framework

The psychological perspective of empowerment focuses on the perception of employee on empowerment. Spreitzer (1995) defined psychological empowerment as an intrinsic task motivation that manifests itself in cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work roles. Intrinsic task motivation is positively valued experience that an individual derives directly from a task that produces motivation and satisfaction. Short and Reinhart (1992) introduces psychological empowerment in educational settings that is dependent on six dimensions. The dimensions are autonomy, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, impact, and decision making (Wan, 2005).

Autonomy refers to academicians' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life (Womack & Loyd, 2004). Professional growth refers to the degree of opportunities that university and departments provide for academicians to grow and develop professionally (Short & Johnson, 1994). Self-efficacy is related to the perception of self-knowledge and belief that academicians are personally competent and decision-making process in educational context involves collaborative communication, problem solving sessions, and goal setting (Womack & Loyd, 2004).

There are three main organizational cultures that are used for the aim of this study. Clan culture is related to shared values and goals, participation, and a sense of family. Adhocracy focuses on creativity and entrepreneurship, and hierarchy culture refers to many rules and regulations. (Fralinger, 2007; Johnson, 2009).

Different types of organizational cultures have different impacts on psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment of academicians has been suggested to be influenced by the organizational culture (Johnson, 2009).

The connection between culture in organization and psychological empowerment built on the body of research describing the relationship between the aspects of contextual factors and employees' work behaviors (Spreitzer, 1996). Organizational culture can be a powerful influence on cognitions of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996). But in this research, we focus on the type of culture that helps academicians to feel empowered.

3. Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment refers to a set of psychological states that are necessary for individuals to feel a sense of control in relation to their work. Rather than focusing on managerial practices that share power with employees at all levels, the psychological perspective is focused on how employees experience their work. This perspective refers to empowerment as the personal beliefs that employees have about their role in relation to the organization (Spreitzer, 2007). According to Spreitzer the four dimensions of psychological empowerment are as follows: Meaning involves a fit between the needs of one's work role and one's beliefs, values and behaviors.

Psychological empowerment may be used as a means to motivate the academicians is in order to increase their level of performance in teaching and research.

Psychological empowerment includes intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral empowerment. Several research efforts focused on psychological empowerment in business and education. Spreitzer's (1996) model of psychological empowerment in organizations describes empowerment as a result of an employees' perception of her/his personal state or interpersonal interaction.

4. Organizational Culture

According to Hofstede (2001), organizational culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another. Schein (2004) defines organizational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that is learnt by the organization as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. Organizational culture shapes organizations and provides a better understanding of complex organizational components, such as empowerment (Johnson, 2009).

Organizational culture plays an important role in the successfulness of the change process and primary component of functional decision making in universities (Lincoln, 2010).

The university culture is full of complexity as the beliefs and practices of trustees, senior administrators, faculty members, campus community members, competitors, and society combine to shape the effectiveness of that university.

Three different types of culture namely clan, adhocracy, and hierarchy in university may have different influences on academic staff workplace behaviors (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

The Competing Values Framework came out from empirical studies on the concept of organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). The Competing Values Framework is possible to be used in organizational context. Moreover, it can also be used to determine the existing and desired cultures of organizations. Besides that it can also be used to examine organizational gaps in a change process of an organization. Concerning the Competing Values Framework as a basis (Cameron & Quinn, 2006), organizational culture is classified based on the flexibility of the relationship pattern inside the organization, and focus in conducting efforts toward goals. These cultures formed certain characteristic on their dimensions, including dominant character, leadership, management, organizational bonding, strategic emphasis and success criteria.

The Clan culture can be defined as a family-type organization so that this kind of organizations promotes teamwork and participation in group processes. This form of organization promotes a human work environment, with the managerial goal of empowering employees by gaining their participation, commitment, and loyalty (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Adhocracy is an organizational culture which gives a lot more opportunity for individuals to develop in their own way, as long as they are consistent with the organization goals. Within an adhocracy, power flows from individual to individual or from task team to task team depending on what problem is being addressed at the time (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). Hierarchy culture emphasizes an environment that is relatively stable, where tasks and functions can be integrated and coordinated, uniformity in products and services can be maintained, and workers and jobs are under control (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Psychological empowerment is more likely to get realized when the appropriate organizational culture contains (Johnson, 2009). The culture that focuses on autonomy for participation would improve the psychological empowerment.

Different cultural types have different impacts on psychological empowerment.

There is a knowledge gap in terms of the relationships between organizational culture types and each of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment especially in the context of higher education. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill in this knowledge gap.

5. Methodology

The sample for the aim of the study is academicians from UAMD in year 2013. The study is a qualitative study where semi-structured questionnaires are used. Ratios of

academicians in the university were considered for interviews. A total of 46 interviews were obtained.

The academicians were given face-to-face explanations regarding the purpose for their participation. The academicians are kept anonymous to encourage better responses.

The instrument has two sections; psychological empowerment components like autonomy, impact, decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy and organizational culture with its dimensions: leadership style, organizational structure, management, success definition where is tried to define the culture style (clan, hierarchy, adhocracy).

Clan was the strongest predictor of decision making, professional growth, status, autonomy and impact, while market was the second strongest predictor for decision making and professional growth. Only adhocracy culture type had significant predictive power on self-efficacy and no significant prediction of hierarchy culture with any of six psychological empowerment components.

There was no significant relationship between impact and adhocracy culture. Similarly, there were significant relationships between impact and two other types of market and hierarchy cultures. Clan was the strongest predictor of decision making, professional growth, status, autonomy and impact, while market was the second strongest predictor for decision making and professional growth. Only adhocracy culture type had significant predictive power on self-efficacy and no significant prediction of hierarchy culture with any of the six psychological empowerment components.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research results reveal that organizational culture is a predictor of faculty psychological empowerment. The result shows the role of organizational culture on increasing academic staffs' psychological empowerment. Organizational culture which is based on an open communication and flexibility allows academics to participate in decision making and express their opinions and support the feedbacks in universities. This culture contributes to fostering psychological empowerment among academics in higher education.

Specifically, clan culture was the strongest predictor of psychological empowerment and its five components except self-efficacy. The clan culture is characterized as having high flexibility, individuality, and spontaneity as well as internal emphasis.

Clan culture emphasizes flexibility and discretion rather than the stability and control of hierarchy. Therefore, as clan culture is a strongest predictor for academicians' psychological empowerment more emphasis should be done on making the environment friendlier to the employees rather than controlling them.

Results of study also indicate that adhocracy culture was a best predictor for self-efficacy dimension of psychological empowerment. Self-efficacy refers to the academicians confidence in their ability to teach and do research well. The self-efficacy among academicians in their workplace leads to productivity, participation, creativity and innovation and being part of the decision-making process.

By creating a greater sense of psychological empowerment on academic staff, more positive gain would be felt such as on levels of organizational commitment and job

satisfaction. An organizational culture that is conducive to change is one of the important factors that can influence on psychological empowerment. Empowerment culture is needed in research universities to improve effectiveness and quality of creating new knowledge which is the main goal of these organizations.

References

- Biron, M. & Bamberger, P. (2010) The impact of structural empowerment on individual well-being and performance: taking agent performances, self-efficacy and operational constraints into account, *Human Relations*, 63(2), 163-191.
- Cameron, K. S., and Quinn, R. E. (2006). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fralinger, B. (2007). Organizational culture at the university level: A study using the OCAI instrument. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 4(11), 85-98.
- Henkin, A. B., & Marchiori, D. M. (2003). Empowerment and organizational commitment of chiropractic faculty, *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, 26(6), 275-281.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences, comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Johnson, B.A. (2009). Empowerment of nurses through organizational culture, *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 30(1) 8-13.
- Lincoln, S. (2010). From the individual to the world: how the competing values framework can help organizations improve global strategic performance, *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 3 (1), 3-9. Retrieved from http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol3iss1/Lincoln_ELJV3I1_pp3-9.pdf
- Meyer, D. (2005), Making academic careers more attractive – three basic principles, *OECD Conference on Trends in the Management of Human Resources*, Paris, 25-26 August
- Quinn, R. E., & Rohrbaugh, J. (1983). A spatial model of effectiveness criteria: Towards a competing values approach to organizational analysis. *Management Science*, 29(3), 363–377.
- Schein, E. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership*, (3rd ed), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Short, P. M., & Johnson, P. E. (1994). Exploring the Links among Teacher Empowerment, Leader Power, and Conflict. *Education*, 114(4), 581-593.
- Short, P. M., & Rinehart, J. S. (1992). Empowerment within the School Environment School Participant Empowerment Scale: Assessment of Level of. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 52(4), 951-961.
- Spreitzer, G. M. (1996). Social structural characteristics of psychological empowerment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), 483-504. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/256789>
- Strazzeri, L. (2005). managing motivation and commitment versus compensation and research institutions, *OECD Conference in Trends in the Management of Human Resources*, 25-26 August, 2005, Paris.
- Wan, E. (2005). Teacher empowerment as perceived by teachers in Hong Kong, *Teachers College Record*, 107, 842-861. Retrieved from <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langbo=1&nodeID=2075>.
- Wang, G., & Lee, P. D. (2009). Psychological empowerment and job satisfaction: an analysis of interactive effects, *Group Organization Management*, 34(3) 271-296
- Womack, C. E., & Loyd, G. (2004). Quit essential Leadership: Leading by Design *College Quarterly*, 7(2).