SUBORDINATE TRUST IN SUPERVISOR AND ORGANIZATION: EFFECTS ON SUBORDINATE PERCEPTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

Mine Afacan FINDIKLI
Management and Organization, Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul University
Istanbul, TR-34452, Turkey
E-mail: mine.findikli@boun.edu.tr

Adem GULDEN
Management and Organization, Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul University
Istanbul, TR-34452, Turkey
E-mail: agulden@istanbul.edu.tr

Fatih SEMERCIOZ
School of Business, Istanbul University, Istanbul TR-34320, Turkey
E-mail: fsemerci@istanbul.edu.tr

Abstract

This research examines the relationship between psychological empowerment and trust in organization and supervisor. In order to find out about the relationship among study variables, a research group has been formed among the employees of three companies operating in the field of infertility treatment in medicine industry and supplying hormones for follicular development. First, variables of trust in organization and supervisor have been dealt with regarding demographic factors. It has been investigated that there is no significant difference in terms of position, experience and age, whereas, given trust in supervisor, there is a significant difference in terms of gender and education. Then, relationships between the variables have been focused on. The findings have revealed there is a strong and positive relationship between trust in supervisor and the subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment in terms of meaning and competence factors. Trust factor as an intervening variable is thought to have an effect on the perceptions of psychological empowerment.

Key Words: *psychological empowerment, trust, supervisor, organization*

JEL Classification: M10

1. INTRODUCTION

In an environment of ever-increasing competition, it is vital that employees incorporate their creative and innovative skills for the accomplishment of organizational goals (Randolph ,1995; Pfeffer ,1999; Laschinger et al., 2001; Chan et al., 2008). Empowerment is one of the concepts taken into consideration in order to construct such an organizational context. Having internalized organizational goals, empowered employees go beyond formally defined roles, feel eager to follow and adapt to changes, and become successful (Berlew, 1986; Conger, 1989; Cole, 1995;Randolph, 1995; Dobbin, 1999; Day, 1999; Kotter, 1999). Another concept is trust which plays a vital role in employees utilizing the knowledge and competencies they possess so as to realize organizational goals. Furthermore, it is necessary for proper interaction and cooperation between supervisors and subordinates as well as for the proper operation of the organization as a whole (Costa ve Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007).

Literature review indicates that previous research mainly focused on the effects of empowerment on trust and the relationship between them from the perspectives of managers for organizational effectiveness (Gomez&Rosen, 2001; Laschinger& Finegan, 2005; Moye&Henkin, 2005). Therefore, these two concepts should also be considered from subordinate perspectives in order to clarify their relationship with each other. It is also vital to understand the nature of empowerment and how it functions and relates to trust for the success of empowerment efforts. Therefore, this research focuses on the relationship between empowerment and trust, and the effects of trust on empowerment. The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationships between subordinate trust in supervisor and organization, and their perceptions of psychological empowerment.

2. THEORATICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Empowerment

Empowerment is examined from relational and motivational aspects (Conger& Kanungo, 1988). Relational empowerment can be regarded as a process in which leaders or managers share the power they have with their subordinates. Feeling empowered, employees start to play their part effectively (Lin, 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 1999). Thus, empowerment helps them focus on goals, making them concentrate more on their roles, communicate with one another more effectively and act smoothly (Caudron, 1999). Motivational empowerment refers to the motive to influence and control others (Conger&Kanungo, 1988). Individuals' need for power – motivational power – has its essence in an internal need for self-determination or feeling of self-efficacy. Having therefore addressed this need, employees can be motivated in such a way that they contribute to company goals most (Borowski, 1998; Willis, 1999; Arslantaş, 2008).

Thomas&Velthouse (1990) stresses that empowerment involves giving power or energy. In their cognitive model they focus on the question whether employees feel empowered or not, coming up with four cognitive elements to answer this question: sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. Spreitzer (1995) uses similar dimensions to those of Thomas and Velthouse: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning, in terms of individual's own ideals and standards, is the value attached to the goal of the task carried out (Thomas ve Velthouse, 1990). Furthermore, meaning is the harmony between what the role of a task requires and beliefs, values, and behaviors (Spreitzer, 1995). Competence is the equivalent of the concept of self-efficacy in the model Conger&Kanungo (1988) have proposed. It is the belief that an individual has as to the capability of carrying out a task skillfully. Self-determination is individual's sense of choice in what path to take and how to make way. Impact points to the degree to which an individual can affect strategic, managerial and operational outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995).

Research shows that practices of employee empowerment contribute to managerial and organizational effectiveness (Conger&Kanungo, 1988; Laschinger et al., 2001; Chan et al., 2008), and increase commitment, having employees assume more responsibility and work for higher quality goods and services (Lin, 1998; Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). Furthermore, empowered employees, in the long term, help to reduce the costs of organization and increase quality, while in the short term they contribute to improving customer satisfaction, thus helping the organization gain a place in today's global business world (Hellinghausen& Myers,1998). By this way, it is observed that organizations acquire flexibility for responding quickly to changes around them (Willis, 1999), and sales figures are seen to increase and less compensation demanded by employees (Day, 1999).

Among the factors affecting psychological empowerment are organizational rank, leader approachability, group value, group effectiveness (Koberg et al., 1999), self-leadership (Houghton&Yoho, 2005), ethical leadership behaviors (Zhu et al., 2004), leader-member exchange (Kim&George, 2005), cultural values (Kirkman &Shapiro, 2001). Trust is regarded as another factor affecting psychological empowerment (Tjosvold et al., 1998; Gomez&Rosen, 2001; Ergeneli et al., 2007; Chan et al., 2008; Arslantaş&Dursun, 2008).

2.2. Trust

Trust is a concept which many researchers tried to come up with a definition (Lewicki et al., 2006). In one of them Mayer et al. (1995:712) define trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party." In another, Rousseau et al. (1998:395) define trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another." Lewicki et al. (1998) define trust as confident, positive expectations regarding the action of the other party. Ellis&Shockley-Zalabak (2001) also regard trust as a positive expectation based on the other party's behavior as to their roles, relationships, experiences, and interdependence. Shapiro et al. (1992) depict trust from an interactional perspective, i.e. in terms of interdependence, risk and vulnerability.

Based on some trust definitions and models proposed, it can be said that trust involves at least two parties and a variety of factors affecting the trust relationship between them: ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995), organizational leadership and organizational competence, openness and integrity, concern and reliability the leader shows for the members of the organization, trustworthiness, and identification (Ellis&Shockley-Zalabak, 2001). Ellis& Shockley-Zalabak state that trust consisting of these factors increases employee identification with the organization, improving organizational performance. Moreover, trust-based relationship between subordinates and supervisors plays an important role in acting for the accomplishment of organizational goals in cooperation, increasing efficiency and productivity in the organization as a whole (Semerciöz et al., 2010, Brower et al., 2009). This research focuses on subordinate trust in supervisor and organization.

2.2.1. Subordinate trust in supervisor

That a subordinate trusts his/her supervisor increases work performance and contributes to organizational citizenship behavior, encouraging the subordinate to maintain the relationship and remain with the organization (Colquitt et al., 2007; Brower et al., 2009) and make an extra effort to create value for the organization (Mayer&Gavin, 2005). Tan&Tan (2000) state that there is a positive relationship between trust in supervisor and the factors of ability, benevolence and integrity. Moreover, when a trust-based environment is composed and maintained, subordinate's sense of responsibility (Cropanza&Mitchell, 2005) and commitment improve (Brower et al., 2009).

Such a trust also increases subordinates' future expectation of benevolence, leading extra motivation on their side and making them do their best (Dirks& Ferrin, 2002). Otherwise, subordinates with no trust in their supervisor will not feel encouraged to make any extra effort to carry out their role properly or assume extra responsibility in an excessively structured environment with too much external control and lack of trust and care (Pierce&Gardner, 2004;

Mayer&Gavin, 2005). In this research, it is hypothesized that subordinate trust in supervisor will affect subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment:

Hypothesis 1

H_1: There is a positive and significant relationship between subordinate trust in supervisor and subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment.

2.2.2. Subordinate trust in organization

As organizations grow larger in terms of human resources, so does organizational trust rather than interpersonal trust gain importance; for social relations becomes more complex and differentiation more noticeable, making interpersonal trust insufficient (Lewis&Weigert, 1985; Shamir&Lapidot, 2003).Organizational trust can be defined as what employees perceive as to organizational trustworthiness (Gambetta, 1988; Tan& Tan, 2000) and it affects organizational perceptions (Muchinsky, 1977). Trust in organization plays an important role in organizational stability and employee welfare (Cook&Wall, 1980). When perceived trustworthy, organizations are thought to be supportive, constructive and at least harmless. Organizations treating employees unfairly, not appreciating their contributions can decrease employee trust, commitment and job satisfaction, causing turnover (Driscoll, 1978; Tan&Tan, 2000).

To create organizational trust it is vital that organizations make employees feel supported by the organization, providing them with such material rewards as increasing their income and autonomy at work (Tan&Tan, 2000; Kim et al., 2004). Creating a trust-based environment is also functional for organizations themselves as it improves organizational effectiveness and the ability to survive (Whitener et al., 1998; Gilbert&Tang, 1998). Hubbell&Chory-Assad (2005) propose that organizational trust can be improved through fair assessments based on fair organizational procedures. In this research, it is hypothesized that subordinate trust in organization will positively affect subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment:

Hypothesis 2

H_1: There is a positive and significant relationship between subordinate trust in organization and subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment.

3. METHOD

3.1. Sample

The population of the research consists of companies operating in medicine industry in Turkey and supplying hormones for follicular development in the field of infertility treatment. In this field there are totally five companies, three of which have been focused in this research, and they are also international companies with a highly institutionalized level. The three companies had 112 personnel in the marketing of the products at the time this research was being conducted. The participants were qualified managers and employees specialized in their fields, as their target is made up of specialist doctors. Their demographic information can be found in "findings" section. Survey technique was used for data collection and totally 86 survey forms were returned with the percentage of 76%, all of which were considered appropriate for the analysis.

3.2. Research scales

Psychological Empowerment Scale: The empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer (1995) was used in order to measure the perceptions of psychological empowerment of the participant. The scale was translated from English into Turkish and used as it is. It has four dimensions – meaning, competence, self-determination and impact – with a total of 12 statements. Statements were responded through a five-point Likert-type scale – 1, being completely disagree; 5, being completely agree. As the survey was a translated version, a factor analysis was conducted to check its validity. As a result of the analysis, one of the questions was omitted from the survey. The four factors of the original scale were reduced to three, combining self-determination and impact as one: (1) meaning, (2) competence, and (3) self-determination&impact. Meaning factor, whose explained total variance is 27.87, consists of three statements. The factor loads vary from .925 to .753. Competence factor, whose explained total variance is 24.44, consists of five statements. The factor loads vary from .864 to .670. Self-determination& impact factor, whose explained total variance is 20.57, consists of three statements. The factor loads vary from .875 to .755. As a result of the reliability analysis Cronbach alfa coefficient is found to be .77. As a result of the reliability analyses of the sub- factors, their Cronbach alfa coefficients are as follows: that of meaning factor: .88; competence: .80; self-determination&impact: .81.

Trust Scale: The trust scale developed by Erdem&Özen (2009) was partly used (trust in supervisor part of their organizational trust scale) in order to measure subordinate trust in supervisor. This part of the scale consists of 19 statements, one of which was left out as its factor loads were overlapped. The Cronbach alfa coefficient of the scale is found to be .97. Considering the sub-factors of the scale, the Cronbach alfa coefficient of the competence factor with eight statements is .97. The explained total variance of the competence factor is 33.49. The factor loads vary from .883 to .622. The Cronbach alfa coefficient of the mentorship factor with seven statements is .91 and the explained total variance is 32.45. The factor loads vary from .861 to .707. The Cronbach alfa coefficient of the fairness factor with tree statements is .91. The explained total variance of the fairness factor is 17.91. The factor loads vary from .818 to .595.

Organizational trust scale: The organizational trust scale developed by Nyhan & Marlowe (1997) was used in order to measure subordinate trust in organization. This scale has four statements. The Cronbach alfa coefficient of the scale is found to be .87, indicating that the scale is reliable. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis the explained total variance is 72.54. One factored construct has been confirmed and the factor loads vary from .867 to .818.

The collected data have been classified and analyzed in SPSS version 13. Means and standard deviation have been calculated; and correlation, regression analyses and t-test have been implemented.

4. FINDINGS

The demographic information of the 86 respondents involved in the analysis is as follows: female 54.7% (N=47), male 45.3% (N=39); regarding age ranges: ages 19-25 8.1% (N=7), ages 26-30 25.6% (N=22), ages 31-40 62.8% (N=54), ages 41-50 3.5% (N=3); regarding average job experience: 1-5 years 26.7% (N=23), 6-10 years 24.4% (N=21), 11-15 years 48.8% (N=42); regarding tenure: 0-5 years 89.5% (N=77), 6-10 years 9.3% (N=8), 11-15 years 1.2% (N=1); regarding positions: sales managers 40.7 (N=35), product managers 10.5% (N=9), sales representatives 30.2% (N=26), HR specialists 8.1% (N=7), sales assistants 10.5% (N=9); regarding

education: high school graduates 2.3% (N=2), graduates 74.4% (N=64), postgraduates 11.6% (N=10), PhDs 11.6% (N=10).

First, data as to trust in supervisor and organization, meaning, competence, and self-determination&impact were analyzed in terms of means, standard deviation and correlations (Table 1).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Values

Variables	Means	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1.Trust in organization	4.26	.56	1				
2. Trust in supervisor	4.25	.54	.37*	1			
3. Meaning	4.51	.55	.13	.41*	1		
4. Competence	4.40	.46	-.16	.86*	-.029	1	
5.Self-determination& impact	4.15	.88	.29*	-.05	.076	-.018	1

p< .01

As a result of the correlation analyses, this research has found a positive and significant relationship between trust in supervisor and organization (r=.37, p<.01). There is also a positive and significant relationship between meaning and trust in supervisor (r=.41, p<.01) as well as between competence and trust in supervisor (r=.86, p<.01). Therefore, it partially supports our first hypothesis that there is a positive and significant relationship between subordinate trust in supervisor and subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment in terms of meaning and competence factors of subordinate. On the other hand, correlation matrix shows that there is a low level of positive and significant relationship between self-determination&impact and trust in organization (r=.29, p<.01); consequently it does not support our second hypothesis that there is a positive and significant relationship between subordinate trust in organization and subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment.

Table 2. t-test Results

Variables		Mean	S.D.	Trust in organization (t values)	Mean	S.D.	Trust in supervisor (t values)
1.Gender	Female	4,28	,59	.30 (p:0,988)	4,36	,39	1.82 (p:0,001)**
	Male	4,24	,54		4,16	,63	
2.Position	Supervisor	4,36	,47	1.74 (p:0,247)	4,26	,54	.29 (p:0,614)
	Subordinate	4,15	,63		4,23	,55	
3.Education	Bachelor	4,26	,55	.10 (p:0,281)	4,31	,49	1.79 (p:0,034)*
	Postgraduate	4,25	,61		4,03	,66	
4. Experience	-10 years	4,31	,48	.85 (p:0,418)	4,25	,50	.02 (p:0,659)
	+10 years	4,21	,63		4,25	,58	
5. Age	-30 years	4,31	,52	.59 (p:0,675)	4,27	,45	.28 (p:0,096)
	+30 years	4,23	,58		4,24	,59	

*p<.05, **p<.01

Then, t-test has been conducted to find out the differences among the participants in terms of demographics such as gender, position, education, job experience, and age (Table 2). Regarding demographical variables, it has been found that there is a significant difference among groups in terms of gender and education as to the level of trust in supervisor.

According to the t-test results, the research has found no significant difference in terms of position, experience, and age of the respondents' demographics and trust in supervisor and organization. On the other hand, considering trust in supervisor there is a significant difference in terms of gender (p: .001)** and education (p: .034)*. In light of these results, it can be said that female employees trust their supervisors more than male ones, and employees of bachelor level trust their supervisors more than those of graduate level.

Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis conducted as to the effects of trust in supervisor and organization on the "meaning" factor of psychological empowerment. Regression model is significant (F= 8.58, p< .01). The variables account for 15% of the total variance. Considering trust factors there is a positive and significant relationship only between trust in supervisor and meaning factor (β = .42, p<.01). Trust in supervisor affects psychological empowerment in terms of meaning.

Table 3. Results of regression analysis as to the meaning factor of psychological empowerment

Variables	β	t
Trust in organization	-.02	-.14
Trust in supervisor	.42***	3.90
R^2		.17
Adjusted R^2		.15
F		8.58***

Table 4 shows the results of the regression analysis conducted as to the effects of trust in supervisor and organization on the "competence" factor of psychological empowerment. Regression model is significant (F= 114.18, p< .01). The variables account for 73% of the total variance. Considering trust factors there is a positive and significant relationship only between trust in supervisor and competence factor (β = .87, p<.01). Trust in supervisor affects psychological empowerment in terms of competence.

Table 4. Results of regression analysis as to the competence factor of psychological empowerment

Variables	β	t
Trust in organization	-.03	.50
Trust in supervisor	.87***	14.22
R^2		.73
Adjusted R^2		.73
F		114.18***

Table 5 shows the results of the regression analysis conducted as to the effects of trust in supervisor and organization on the "self-determination&impact" factor of psychological

empowerment. Regression model is not significant. Trust in supervisor and organization does not affect psychological empowerment in terms of self-determination&impact.

Table 5. Results of regression analysis as to the self-determination&impact factor of psychological empowerment

Variables	β	t
Trust in organization	-.16	-1.38
Trust in supervisor	.01	.11
R^2		.03
Adjusted R^2		.01
F		1.04

According to the results of the analyses, on testing the hypotheses it is seen that Hypothesis 2 has been rejected. There is not a significant relationship between subordinate trust in organization and psychological empowerment. Hypothesis 1 has been partly accepted. Trust in supervisor affects psychological empowerment in terms of meaning and competence.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the research carried out by Chan et al. (2008:461), "subordinates' trust has been found to be a significant psychological state which relates positively to the extent of perceived empowerment by employees". Furthermore, another study by Ergeneli et al. (2007:41) revealed "a significant relationship between cognition-based trust in immediate managers and overall psychological empowerment". Ergeneli and her colleagues found that cognition-based trust related to meaning and competence aspects whereas affect-based trust related to impact only; but no relationship was identified between any types of trust in immediate manager and self-determination.

Having analyzed the relationships between the variables, Hypothesis 2 has been rejected while Hypothesis 1 has been partially accepted. According to the results of the analysis, trust in supervisor positively affects the participants' psychological empowerment in terms of meaning and competence, which has been consistent with the results of the research done by Gomez&Rosen (2001). They investigated the relationship between managerial trust and employee empowerment, revealing that managerial trust affected perceived empowerment via manager-employee relationships. In this context, managers of the companies in which this research was conducted play a vital role in raising the employees' awareness of the importance of their responsibilities for and contributions to the achievement of the organizational goals. Thus, employees attach more importance and meaning to their roles.

Also, it has been revealed that trust in supervisor affects psychological empowerment in terms of competence. Considering that the mean of long terms of job experience and competence is high (mean: 4.40), it is understood that they rely on their adeptness. It is conveyed that employees who trust their supervisor and think they have the self-efficacy will be able to use their competencies and focus on their roles more effectively to create value for their organizations (Tan& Tan, 2000; Dirks&Ferrin, 2002; Mayer&Gavin, 2005; Cropanza&Mitchell 2005; Colquitt et al.,2007; Brower et al., 2009). The results of the research can also be said to be consistent with above-mentioned views. Employees who trust their supervisor's knowledge of their work, self-discipline and

fairness, and feel that they are valued become more responsible toward their supervisor. Thus, they use their skills more effectively to carry out their roles properly.

This research has found no significant relationship between trust in supervisor and self-determination&impact factor, which was grouped as one factor. According to the research data, despite high means of the responses as to self-determination& impact factor there is no significant relationship between this factor and trust in supervisor, which may be an outcome of the acquisition and merger experienced by the companies subject to this research as well as policies and rules made by the top management. Cultural changes might also bear such consequences in the process of badly managed mergers causing uncertainty on the part of employees (Lubatkin, 1983; Killing, 1983).

Stressing the importance of creating an atmosphere of trust, Whitener et al. (1998), propose that organizations be designed in a way that supports trust and managers be encouraged to develop trust-based relations. In addition, a reward system should be developed so that they can respond to such a design. Creating an atmosphere of trust allows employees to feel psychologically empowered.

Shamir&Lapidot (2003) stated that subordinate trust in supervisor depends not only on the personal traits and interpersonal skills of the leader, but also on subordinate trust in the system. Lack of organizational trust reduces employees' job satisfaction (Driscoll, 1978) and affects their performance negatively (Gilbert& Tang, 1998). In this research it was considered that subordinate trust in organization would positively affect subordinate perceptions of psychological empowerment, thus relationships were analyzed. In spite of high means of subordinate trust in organization (mean: 4.26) and long tenure (mean: 44.31), this research has found no significant relationship between trust in organization and perceptions of psychological empowerment.

Considering the companies involved in this research are international, one of the main reasons why employees work for them is thought to be the trust they have in the institutional nature of these companies. According to the result in question, it is considered that respondents have already had the trust in their companies but they do not relate this trust to their psychological empowerment. In light of their cultural characteristics employees tend to trust their supervisors as they are in a one-to-one relationship with them. It is assumed that employees focus on organizational trust at the moment of getting the job but then they turn their focus onto their supervisors' attitudes towards them; and the more consistent, fair and supportive their managers' attitudes, the more empowered they feel.

Empowerment practices improve employee commitment, managerial and organizational effectiveness, the quality of goods and services, and performance, thus enabling organizations to adapt to environmental changes (Conger& Kanungo, 1988; Lin, 1998, Willis, 1999). Trust factor as an intervening variable is also thought to be effective on the perceptions of psychological empowerment. Therefore, this research is thought to contribute to literature clarifying the relationship between trust in supervisor and organization from the perspective of subordinates. However, it is not aimed to reach any generalization through this research, as the scope of the research is limited to a small industry in Turkey. Therefore, it is suggested that the relationships between the variables in questions be further analyzed in other fields.

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