

THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

Today, one of the most important strategies of the pioneer organizations in dealing with highly competitive and dynamic environments is empowering human resources. By the link between individual and collective interests, transformational leadership also encourages people to excellence. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the role of transformational leadership in facilitating employee's psychological empowerment. The research is descriptive and correlational. The population of interest consists of managers and employees of a service provider organization in Tehran; among whom 276 persons were randomly selected as the statistical sample. Standard data collection tool is a questionnaire that its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated that all dimensions of transformational leadership have significant positive impact on the psychological empowerment of employees. Accordingly some suggestions were made to the managers and researchers.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, psychological empowerment, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual inspiration, personal consideration, vision expansion

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the capacity and power of most countries have shifted from industries to services. The service sector accounted for a large portion of economic ventures of societies. In the developed countries, the share of services in GDP is increasing and a large section of work force are engaged in this section. In Iran, about 47.5 % of work force works engaged in service provision sectors (Daneshjafari, 1393). In spite of such a great role, poor performance, high costs, budgeting issues and dissatisfaction of service innovation in services as one of the most critical concerns of service organizations (Windrom, 2008). On the other hand, the nature of jobs at service organizations in such a way that the human factor plays a very decisive in the performance of these organizations. Intangibility of services cause the ability of employees to interact directly with the customer service has significant impact on customer evaluations of the quality of provided services. Moreover, the role of human resources in creating innovations in services is vital.

Most experts, deem empowerment as an effective strategy in removing deficiencies and improving quality in public service provision (Fernands & Moldogviz, 2012). In fact, empowerment as a modern approach for creating motivation has recently turned into a hot debate in management. Rapid changes, advances in technologies and explicit and implicit competitions in the world, have emphasized on the significance of empowerment more than ever. Empowerment aims at sharing power, information and resources with the employees. Several studies have reported different benefits of empowerment including improving performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and involvement (Fernands & Moldogziv, 2009; Park & Rainy, 2007). Both employees and managers benefit from empowerment. Empowerment help employees develop a feeling of self efficacy and creates conditions for them to have autonomy. Consequently, this will improve their abilities and skills and ultimately their effectiveness. On the other hand, by developing motivated and capable employees, empowerment will enable managers to react faster and more effectively in the dynamic competitive environment.

In spite of the growing number of researches which have dealt with the issue of empowerment of employees, there is still no enough knowledge about the influencing and facilitative determinants of empowerment (Fernandz & Moldogziv, 2009). Among the factors influencing empowerment, this piece of research has selected the role of transformational leadership. The literature indicates that transformational leaders modify the goals, identity, needs, priorities and values of their employees and consequently are able to clarify the goals to their employees. Such leaders emphasize the significance of the duties allocated to the employees and help them understand the meaning of their jobs (Dubinski et al., 1995).

Accordingly, the current research investigates how much of each of the transformational leadership dimensions influence the psychological empowerment of employees in service provider organizations and eventually, present some practical suggestions. The results help to promote the theories about the building blocks and facilitative factors of psychological empowerment and also employees have more efficient performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Empowerment

Human capital empowerment means developing required potentials in the employees which enables them to create added value in the organization and carrying out effective and efficient role and responsibility in the organization (Babayi, 2013). Empowerment doesn't equal to giving power to individuals; they already have much (in the form of knowledge and motivation) which help them to do their best. Empowerment means to emancipate this power. In fact, empowerment is different from giving power to individuals. Power is directly allocated to individuals. Empowerment, however, needs some conditions in which individuals can make themselves empowered (Veten & Cameron, 2006). Empowerment means much more than merely giving authority to employees. At the time of empowerment not only task is asked assigned to employees but also the conditions are provided that they can decide for themselves to perform these tasks (Aghayar, 2003).

Psychological empowerment dimensions

Spreitzer (1992) enumerated four recognition dimensions (factors) for empowerment. In this study, based in Mishra research (1992), one dimension has been added. Below, these five key dimensions of empowerment will be explained:

1) Sense of competency (Self-sufficiency): When people are empowered, they feel self-efficacy, i.e. they feel that they have the necessary ability and skills for a successful work (Benins & Nanus, 1985). Such a feeling determines that whether they will attempt to do the hard work and have perseverance or not (Bandura, 1986).

2) Sense of meaningfulness: empowered people feel to be meaningful. They believe what they do, is valuable. Ideals and standards are consistent with what they do. Empowered people care about what they are doing, and to believe it, they have a sense of identity because of this (Benins & Nanus, 1985).

3) Sense of having choice: Self-determination means to have a right to choose their personal tasks. They consider themselves as creators and self-initiated and they are able to carry out

their own initiatives, to make independent decisions and put new ideas to the test (Vogt & Murrell, 1990).

4) Sense of having impact: Empowered people have a sense of personal control over their results. They believe that they can make changes by influencing the environment in which they work (Dover, 1999).

5) A sense of trust in others: Empowered people feel that they will be treated fairly. They are certain that the final result of their work, would be justice not harm. In other words, this sense of trust means having a sense of personal security (Mishra, 1992).

Transformational leadership

Although Bronze (1978) was the first one who introduced the term 'transformational leadership' in political science, it was Bass (1985) who used this term in his research and made it popular in organization leadership domain. Bass define a transformational leader as someone who encourages followers to do something beyond what they are expected to do. Such leaders look for a link between personal and collective interests which helps the employees strive for excellence (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

Transformational leadership is a conscious, ethical and spiritual process which establishes the desirable models of power relations between the leaders and the followers in order to achieve collective goals and make transformations in line with social systems' model. These system are followed by trustworthy cooperative projects. To actualize such leadership, there needs to be significance changes in the power relations, transformation in power hierarchy and transmitting it to horizontal level based on public equality. Hence, transformational leadership is a complicated and dynamic process in which the leaders influence the values, beliefs and goals of the followers. Such leaders move the organization forward from present to future, identify environment needs and facilities changes. Furthermore, they present a vision of the potential opportunities for the employees and develop in them a sense of commitment for change, improving culture. They make the employees feel the need to design innovative strategies for optimal use of the organization resources (Sobhaninejad et al., 2010).

Components of Transformational Leadership

In this research the following dimensions have been used to measure transformational dimensions:

1. Inspirational Motivation. Inspirational Motivation represented the appeal of challenging followers by symbols, and metaphors. In other words, inspirational motivation leaders expressed the importance and value of desired goals in simple ways and displayed high levels of

expectations. Thus, followers reacted by willingly increasing their efforts to attain the vision. Although charismatic and inspirational motivation leadership were often highly correlated, inspirational leadership might or might not overlap with charismatic leadership. It depended on the extent to which followers seek to identify with the leaders (Bass and Avolio, 1993).

2. Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual Stimulation referred to leaders who challenged their followers' ideas and values for solving problems. Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders are able to show their followers new ways of looking at old problems. Such leaders encouraged their followers to use non-traditional thinking to deal with traditional problems and they often listened to followers' ideas even if different from theirs. The message was that "followers should feel free to try out new approaches, and their ideas will not be publicly criticized because they differ from those of the leader" (Coad and Berry, 1998,).

3. Idealized Influence. Idealized Influence referred to leaders who encouraged followers to share their visions and goals. These leaders had strong personal appeal (Comer, Jolson, Dubinsky, and Yammarino, 1995) and power to influence over his/her subordinates by providing clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and perseverance to achieve the most difficult objectives.

4. Personal Consideration. where the leader recognizes the different desires and needs of followers and provides opportunities that enables their growth. However, whether this factor is truly transformational has been a subject of dispute, and some recent work argues that it is better treated as a transactional factor (Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008).

5. Vision Explanation. transformational leaders direct and inspire employees' effort by raising their awareness of the importance of organizational values and outcomes. This process requires leaders to create a sense of vision, mission, and purpose among employees, providing confidence and direction about the future of the organization. The appeal to broader goals activates the higher-order needs of employees, encouraging them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization and its clientele (Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008).

The relation between transformational leadership and Psychological empowerment

Transformational leadership is an influential factor of empowerment. If power is defined as the ability to force people to do something, the employees are powerful when they have access to information line, support, resources and learning and growth opportunities. However, if any of such lines or resources are not available to them, they don't have power and can't do their duties effectively. Due to the significance of leadership issue in organization, the leaders act as powerful productive factors influencing empowerment in the work area. Hence, the leaders are

the most critical factors helping the employees to be powerful and capable (Chen & Confer, 2006).

Zahar and TeneGazit (2008), have pointed to the relationship between transformational leadership and empowerment as a social learning process. The group members frequently interact and consult the leaders regarding group and organization level issues. The leader can set a warm and intimate relation with the employees and make it sustainable through reciprocal trust, honesty and rich verbal communication between the leaders and members. Such leaders made opportunities to clarify perceptions (Dragoni, 2005).

Transformational leadership promotes the employees' responsibilities, increase their potential to think about themselves and encourage them to have innovative ideas. With transformational leadership, the employees will embrace perceptions which respect their capabilities and autonomies and support them (Zohar, Tenegazit, 2008).

Self-determination theory indicate that leaders' autonomy and support promote autonomous motivation. This theory makes a distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation points to the process of motivating through getting interested to a specific activity (intrinsic motivation) and internalization of an activity (integrating extrinsic motivation). In other words, autonomous motivation includes intrinsic motivations and internalization of extrinsic ones. The extent to which people can be motivated to perform their tasks independently is predictable by supporting independence in the field of work.

Transformational leaders empower their employees through psychological empowerment (capability, sense of meaningfulness, sense of having impact, sense of having autonomy). The researches show that transformational leaders transform ambitions, identities, goals, priorities and values of their employees and consequently are able to clarify the meaning of the goal for them. Such leaders pay individual attention to employees and create conditions for their personal growth. The managers increase their employees' self confidence and efficacy through providing consultation, training, giving constant feedback and encouraging them. Boss (1985) believes that a transformational leader finds innovative and creative strategies to do a task by creating a strong feeling of self determination. Very often, such perspectives and behaviors are transmitted to the employees via giving more autonomy to them (Martin & Bush, 2006).

Although transformational leadership has a direct influence on Psychological empowerment, it can have an indirect impact on Psychological empowerment through structural empowerment. On the one hand, structural and psychological empowerment have different basis, focus and content. Psychological empowerment takes a psychological approach toward the employees' actions or their reactions to the stimuli. In other words, psychological

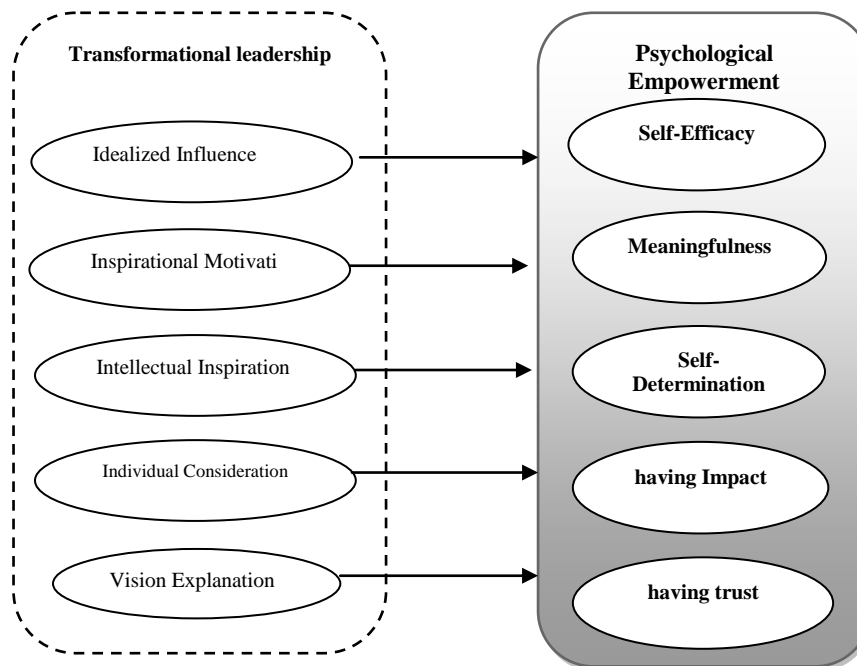
empowerment reveal the employees' reactions to structural empowerment. On the other hand, empowerment can be implemented through self-determination which increases an atmosphere of supported autonomy, provides relevant information, presents options to choose from and consequently increases autonomy (Sun et al., 2012).

Transformational leadership explicitly supports the employees' autonomy and the employees understand this. This will lead to a change in psychological orientations of the employees. This process shows an identical realization of empowerment. Besides, they enhance structural empowerment through empowerment strategies that leads to the employees' psychological empowerment (Menon, 2001).

The conceptual model of the research

Based on the literature mentioned, five dimensions of transformational leadership were considered as independent variables and psychological empowerment as independent variable in this study. To measure transformational leadership Podsacoff's (1996) model was used. To measure psychological empowerment the Spreitzer adjusted model (Spreitzer, 1992) was used. The relation between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment was assumed based on Sun et al (2012). Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of the research.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research



Considering mentioned issues and conceptual model of research about the hypothesized relations among variables , the hypotheses developed in this study are as follow:

1. Idealized Influence has a meaningful and positive effect on psychological empowerment.
2. Inspirational Motivation has a meaningful and positive effect on psychological empowerment.
3. Intellectual Inspiration has a meaningful and positive effect on psychological empowerment.
4. Individual consideration has a meaningful and positive effect on psychological empowerment.
5. Vision Explanation has a meaningful and positive effect on psychological empowerment.

Methodology

The Research Typology

Since the findings of this research are used to solve the problems of the organization, this research can be applied one. Based on the type of data collection technique used, this research is descriptive correlational as the required information of the existing situation was collected using the questionnaire. Also in terms of time is cross-sectional and about type of data is quantitative research.

The population of interest and sample

The population included managers and employees of a service provider organization in Tehran (N=975). 276 of whom (51managers and 225 employees) were randomly selected as the statistical sample.

Data collection tools

The data collection instrument for the initial survey was a questionnaire having 25 items which were arranged based on Likert scale. Ten items measures psychological empowerment, and each of the five dimensions of transformational empowerment was measured by three items. To estimate the questionnaire reliability, the initial ample consisting of 30 items was pretested. The reliability coefficient was estimated through Cronbach alpha test using SPSS software which was 82%. The reliability estimate of the items related to the research questions are presented in Table 1.

Based on table 2, Cronbach's Alpha of all of the questions related to all of the variables is more than critical limit of 0.7; consequently, it could be stated that measuring models are at an acceptable level.

Table 1. the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire

	empowerment	Idealized Influence	Inspirational Motivation	Intellectual Inspiration	Individual Consideration	Vision Explanation
reliability coefficient	77%	75%	80%	72%	76%	78%

Data analysis

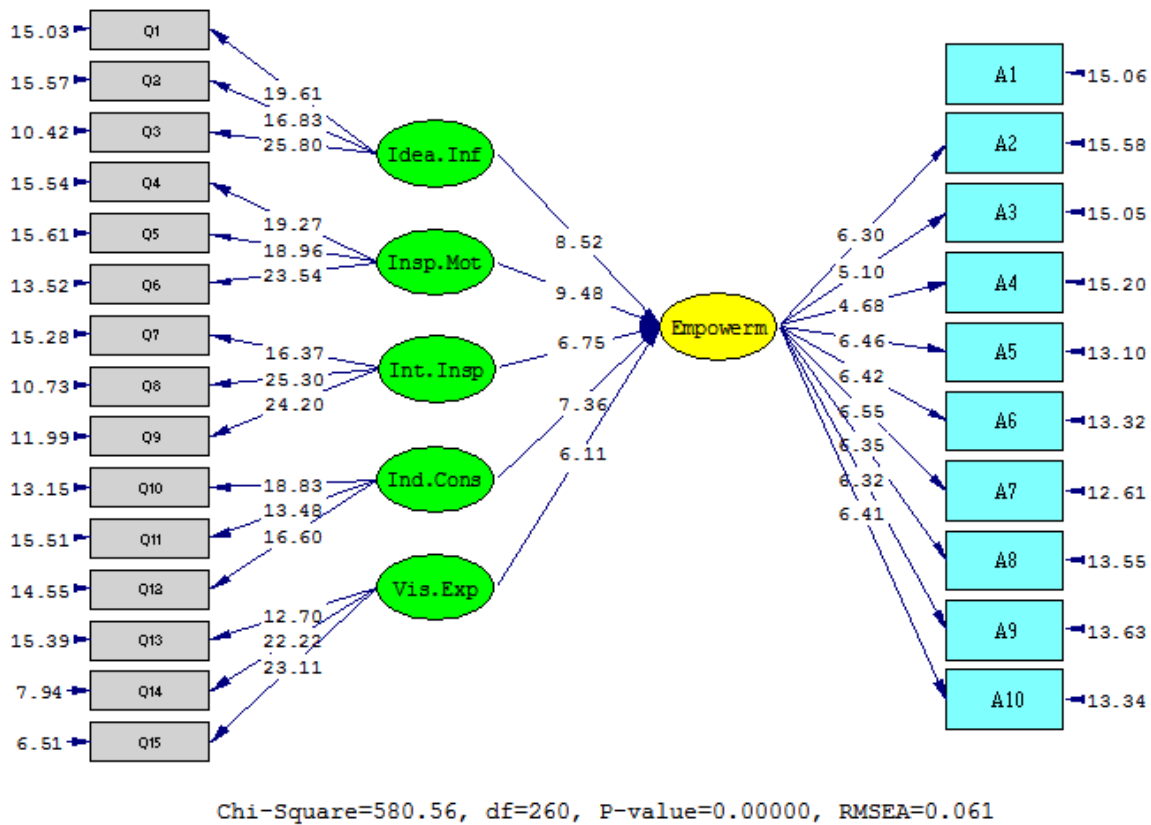
Structural equations modeling using version 8.5 of Lizrel Software have been utilized in order to analyze the data. In the mentioned model, we want to identify whether the relations among the hidden adjectives that have been extracted based on the theory would be confirmed considering the aggregated data of the sample or not (Kalantari, 2009). There are 25 apparent and 6 latent variables in this model. In order to assess significance of the predicted relations in the assumptions significant model and in order to assess the amount of effect the standard model has been applied.

RESULTS

Specific indexes are used for assessing accuracy of the developed model including: the ratio of chi-squared to the degree of freedom that should be lower than permissible amount of 3, the amount of the average of root-mean square of the adiabatic approximation whose permissible limit should be lower than 0.08 and the amount of Pi that should be lower than 0.05 and the modified fit index should be greater than 0.9. In order to assess significance of dimension of transformational leadership on psychological empowerment, significance model and for assessing the amount of this effect the standard model is used. Regarding significance of the acquired numbers of the model, it could be stated that since the hypothesis test is being performed in the reliability level of 0.95, numbers would be significant that would not be between -1.96 and 1.96. In other words, in case a number would be between -1.96 and 1.96, that number would not be significant.

In order to assess the stated relations in the hypothesis, firstly, significance of the impact of each predicted relations was assessed using significance model and then, using standard model, the amount of each would be assessed. Based on the indexes mentioned in table 2, we are able to judge fitness model of the of the components of transformational leadership on psychological empowerment. The results of the assessment of the significance of the predicted relations are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Effect transformational leadership on psychological empowerment in significance mode



Using the standard model the amount of the impact of the relations in this model whose significance has been confirmed could be assessed as well.

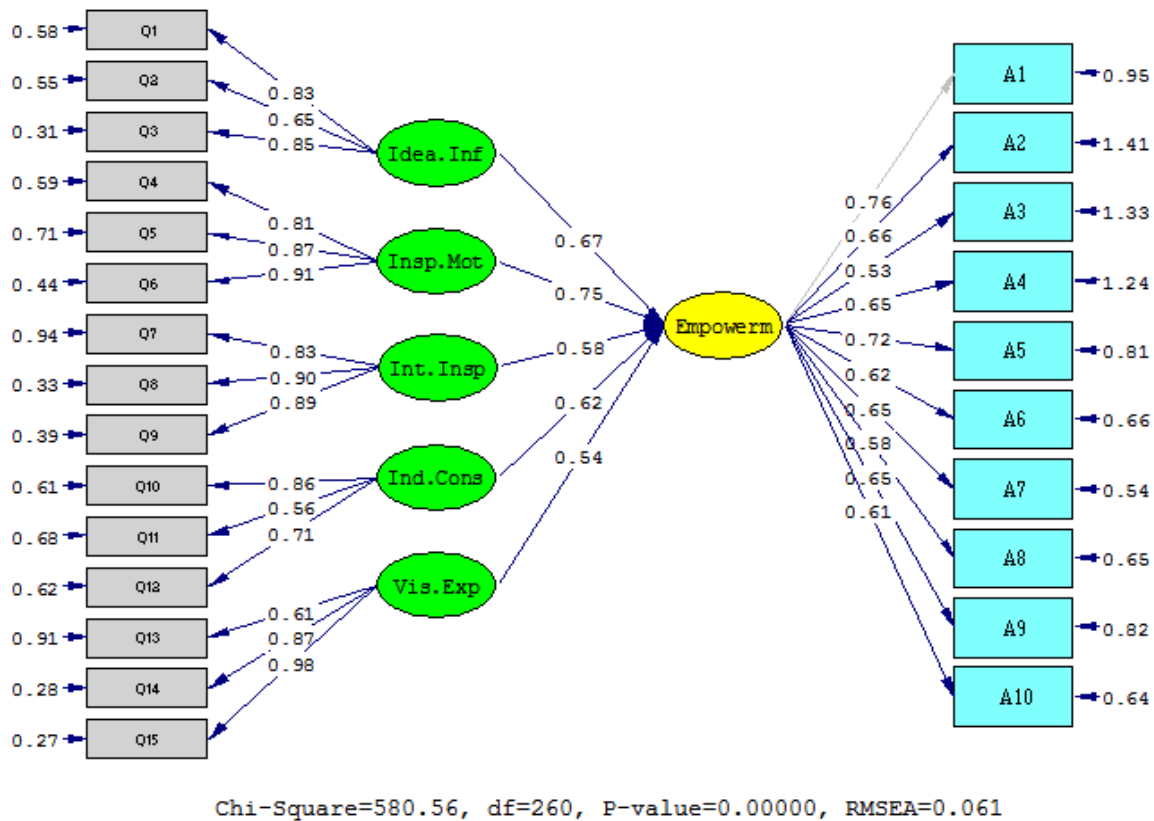
Table 2: Indexes of the fitness model of the effect of transformational leadership on psychological empowerment

Indexes	Permissible limit	Result	Assessment
Ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom	$\chi^2/df < 3$	2.23	Appropriate fitness
Root-mean square of adiabatic approximation (RMSEA)	$0.05 < \text{RMSEA} < 0.08$	0.061	appropriate fitness

The indexes of fitness of the mode, indicates appropriateness of the measuring model of the relevant variables; as the ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom equals 2.23 and less than allowable amount of 3, and the amount of Root-mean Square error of approximation which is 0.061 equals permissible limit which is less than 0.08 and higher than 0.05. Based on this

model, the impact of predicted relations is significant in all hypothesis as well; as their amount for hypothesis first to fifth equals 8.52, 9.48, 6.75, 7.36 and 6.11 respectively and all of them are higher than 1.96.

Figure 3: Effect transformational leadership on psychological empowerment in standard mode



In the standard state, the model indicates that the positive impact of five components of transformational leadership on psychological empowerment is confirmable. Consequently, based on the results acquired from the significance and standard models, the results of the assessment of the hypothesis of the research could be summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Hypotheses testing

hypothesis	Rout: positive and significant effect of ...	Standard coefficient	Significance numbers	Result
1	idealized Influence on psychological empowerment	0.67	8.52	Confirmed
2	inspirational motivation on psychological empowerment	0.75	9.48	confirmed

3	intellectual inspiration on psychological empowerment	0.58	6.75	confirmed
	individual consideration on psychological empowerment	0.62	7.36	confirmed
5	vision explanation on psychological empowerment	0.54	6.11	confirmed

Table 2...

General pattern of the relations among the variables in structural equation model were compatible with the stated hypothesis, all of the 5 investigated relations have been significant. Based on the acquired results all of the components of transformational leadership have significant effects on psychological empowerment. Furthermore, the most determinant component of transformational leadership in this regard has been inspirational motivation (0.75) and the least effect has been related to the vision explanation (0.54).

The overall correlation pattern between variables were in line with the results of the previous studies. The results indicated that all five dimensions of transformational leadership had significant effect on psychological empowerment. These findings were in line with previous studies including Chen and Confer (2006), Deragoni (2005), Zohar and Tenegazit (2008) and Marting and Bush (006), to name as few.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the extent to which transformational leadership is related to psychological empowerment. The findings revealed that leadership along with personal consideration inspiration, employee support, intellectual inspiration, inspirational communication and vision expansion have direct and considerable effect on psychological empowerment of the employees. These findings are in line with Neyestani et al, (2012), Hosseinpur et al. (2010), Ozareli (2002), Bono and Judge (2003), chen and Confer (2006), Zohar and Tenegazit (2008).

It is generally believed that the leaders have critical role on shaping the perceptions of the employees. Several authors (including Sun et al., (2012) have pointed to the significance of leadership and its impact on employee empowerment. Bono and judge (2003) found that those following transformational leadership tenets are more capable and that transformational leaders empower their employees in three ways: increase their employees' qualifications, facilitate the employees' social identity and link work values of the organization to the employees' values.

Transformational leadership gives employees autonomy, authority and enough responsibility to gain new experience and be innovative and understand what happens while they do their duties. In other words, organizational learning is possible in organizations which

give autonomy to individuals to think about what they are supposed to do. Such leaders emphasize actions like: Encouraging employees to share knowledge and experience with each other, hold group meetings to share ideas, create friendly atmosphere, holding group discussion to make decisions about special cases, increasing interaction between managers and employees, facilitating employees' access to information related to their work, increasing interaction between employees.

The leaders can implement a strong sense of goal significance through presenting attractive and clear vision and enthusiastic talks about their duties. Such activities will create a sense of being valuable in the employees which influence their 'receptions of the organization conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, some suggestions are presented here:

- 1- Managers should encourage employees to get involved in organization affairs through presenting a clear picture of the organization's future to the employees and creating friendly and supportive atmosphere in the organization.
- 2- The managers have to trust the capabilities of their employees, pay attention to their ideas and involve them in decision making processes of the organization.
- 3- Presenting a prosperous future, the organization managers will enhance the hope to make achievements and motivate them to perform in line with the organization goals. The managers should also support and train their employees based on each employee's characteristics and capabilities. This will increase the employees' satisfactions and interests in the organization's goals.
- 4- The managers can take advantage of some strategies to intellectually inspire the employees. Among such strategies one can refer to: conflict management, developing groups in which the individuals are encouraged to present their ideas and solutions about the problems, promoting social interactions and friendly relations among the employees.
- 5- Self-efficacy can enhance the individual's self-confidence to get involved in work problems and attempt to change and improve the situation. Such feelings in the employees can help them deem their implicit knowledge and experience valuable and try to improve their performance. This is a synthesis type of creation in which new forms of implicit knowledge are created from the existing implicit knowledge. Besides, the feeling of capability in the individual makes him/her believe that they have valuable knowledge

and experience to teach others. This means creating a new form of knowledge through socialization.

- 6- If the managers try to decrease the bureaucratic issues in doing duties and organization activities, involve the employees in problem solving processes, encourage innovative behaviors, give autonomy to the employees, they can enhance the feeling of impact and self-determination. Such orienting of managers, can increase the significance of knowledge in the employees' views. Furthermore, this will create the feeling of being meaningful in the employers.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

There might be unwanted factors in any research that make limitations to the research; hence, some of the unwanted variables are not under researcher's control. These factors must be determined and the researcher must show his knowledge about the influence of these factors on the research results. In the present study, there were some limitations such as:

- 1) To study the variables the survey (questionnaire tools) has been used; while it was better to use observation and/or interview for some factors. The questionnaire is a tool by which the understandings and attitude of any person is investigated; whereas, the reality might be different with respondent's answers.
- 2) There are two issues must be considered regarding the nature and generalization of the research: firstly, there might be some practical behaviors like other survey researches that are mostly dependent on environmental conditions. Furthermore, intervening variables might affect the supposed relations among variables that are considered in this study.
- 3) Some other important limitations to this research include: reluctance of some of the respondents to answer the questionnaires, not enough carefulness of some of the respondents in answering the questions, the possibility of bias in answering the questions by some of the respondents.

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