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THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES

Abstract:

This study examines the relationship between attitudes of non-management professional staff members in Saudi Public Works Department (PWD) toward participation in decision-making (PDM) and their organizational commitment (OC). It also intends to analyze the extent to which organizational variables and individual/personality variables moderate the participation organizational commitment. From a total of 384 questionnaires which were distributed to non-management professional staff, 328 (85.4%) were returned and usable for the analysis. The results of this study show that the male non-management professional staff in the Saudi PWD perceived that they are not satisfied with the level of participation in decision making in their organization. However, those respondents who perceived they enjoy a higher level of participation tended to feel more committed to the organization. The analyses of moderator variables revealed that increased participation in decision-making would increase commitment to the organization among the non-management professional staff who perceive their superiors as having favorable attitudes toward PDM. For the respondents who perceive they have a high competency level, an increase in participation in all the three decision areas (social, personnel, economic/strategic) heightens their commitment to extra effort and to develop professionally but decreases their desire to remain in the organization. Non-management professional staff who perceive they have high opportunities for career advancement tend to demonstrate high commitment to remain in the organization, to exert extra effort, and to develop professionally. For those who were highly satisfied with communication process in organization, increased participation in decision making on social and economic/strategic related issues raised their commitment to conform with the rules, remain in the organization, exert extra effort, and develop professionally. Some recommendations were proposed at the end of the paper.

Keywords:

Participation in decision making; organizational commitment; non-management professionals.

JEL Classification: O15

Introduction

The concept of employee participation in decision making (PDM) is an attractive technique which permits subordinates to participate in discussing and making various decisions which affect them (Zubair, et. al, 2015; Irawanto, 2015). The opportunity for increased job involvement provided by participative techniques addresses the growing desire among workers to take part in decision making affecting their jobs and to be active contributors to the system rather than merely job holders (Bhuiyan, 2010)..

Literature Review and Research Models

This is an attempt to place the variables selected into a general model of Participation-- Organizational Commitment (PDM--OC) Research Model. The relationships between the variables in the research model are determined by both empirical and theoretical criteria.

Hypothesis One (H1*):* There is a significant relationship between PDM and OC among the non-management professional staff;

Balfour (1990) surveyed 828 employees in twelve agencies in Florida state government. One of the major findings is that participation in decision making emerged as an important determinant of the extent to which an individual experiences and maintains a sense of attachment to the organization. In particular, participation seems most closely associated with how strongly the individual identifies with the organization and the organization's ability to accomplish its mission. This supports the recommendation by Vroom and Jago (1988) and Applebaum (2013) that employees at all levels should be included in decisions that affect their work and role in the organization, because most individuals cannot identify strongly with an organization when leadership excludes them from decisions in which they feel they have a stake and can make an important contribution.

Hypothesis Two (H2*):* There is a significant relationship between PDM and OC among the non-management professional staff who perceived their superiors have a favorable attitudes towards PDM;

One of the critical factors in the work situation, on which effective participation is dependent on the managers' attitude toward interaction with people (Wickramasinghes & Wickramasinghes, 2012). This orientation will manifest itself in the form of a positive leadership style and a conviction that organizational objectives can be achieved through increased employee involvement in decision-making process (Locke & Schweiger, 1990). Miles (1985) and Hou (2011) found that, while managers appear to have faith in participative policies, they do not indicate strong belief in their subordinates' capabilities. This situation can inhibit subordinates' desire to participate actively in the decision-making process.

Hypothesis Three (H3): There is a significant relationship between PDM and OC among the non-management professional staff who perceived they have a competency level;

It is further speculated that, even if workers have the wish and power to participate, their impact will be circumscribed by their understanding of the issues involved or their perceived ability to participate. This point is illustrated by a study conducted by Thim (1980) and Zubair et. al (2015) who found that half of the voluntary members of work councils were not strongly motivated to participate in decision making and complained about having insufficient competence. Kuye and Abdull-Hameed (2011) argue that, in cases where one member has significantly more knowledge than the others, PDM tends to be wasteful of time and effort at best, and harmful to decision quality (if those with less knowledge outvoted the most knowledgeable member) or to an efficiency (caused by delays) at worst.

Hypothesis Four (H4): There is a significant relationship between PDM and OC among the non-management professional staff who perceived they have high opportunities for career advancement;

An important part of feeling appreciated and rewarded for one's efforts on behalf of the organization is having the opportunity to advance ill the organization-to move up to greater responsibility and prestige as one gains knowledge and experience (Elele & Field, 2010). Hou et. al (2011) and Balfour (1990) found that, if employees perceive that the structure and policies of tile organization offer a fair opportunity to advance, they are more likely to develop an exchange-based attachment and make efforts to participate in organizational affairs. Unfortunately, in the context of Saudi Arabia, many public organizations impose recognizable limitations on civil servants' upward mobility. Sometimes this occurs because of the structure of the organization and the existence of many "dead-end jobs" because of the practice of filling many higher level jobs by political appointment, rather than through the merit system (Razali, 1993).

Hypothesis Five (H5): There is a significant relationship between PDM and OC among the non-management professional staff who perceived they are satisfied with communication process in the organization;

This concept refers to the process of transferring the information, ideas or directions from one person to another (Trombetta & Rogers, 1988). The data from the survey conducted by Samaneh and Ahmad (2014) indicated that the communication problems that hamper employees' willingness to participate are: a) one-way communication; b) the unwillingness of management to listen; c) no feedback mechanisms established between the superiors and subordinates. In a qualitative analysis of the nature of power relationships, communication patterns and organizational commitment among managers and non-managers in selected manufacturing industries in southern-central states, Byrd (1985) found that the one-way flow of information negatively affected the managers'

desire to involve actively in the decision-making process.

Methodology

The Research Site

The surveys were conducted at the Saudi Public Works Department (PWD) headquarters office. The PWD is the technological arm of the Government and serves as the main implementing agency for carrying out infrastructure projects for the whole country.

The Sample

The target population of the study was the non-management professional staffs who are employed full time in the PWD at the headquarters office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They are professionals employed full time and do not fit the definition of either a top or middle manager. They do not hold managerial positions.

Instrument

After all components of the questionnaire had been determined, an instrument was constructed .

Findings and Discussions

Reliability of the variables

A summary of the reliability coefficients of the study variables is shown in Table 1. The high levels of reliability for all of the variables is one of the major strengths of this study.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of the Study Variables

VARIABLES	Standardized Alpha Coefficients
PARSOC	.8659
PARNEL	.9550
PARECO	.9201
COMMU	.9001
ADVANCE	.9332
MGTAT	.8470
COMPETE	.8417
INNOV	.7829
SALARY	.7005
REWARD	.8013
JOBEXP	.7353
EFFORT	.9389
PROFESS	.8945
RULES	.9469
REMAIN	.9208

Results of Inferential Statistics

Relationship between participation in decision-making and organizational commitment

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no significant relationship between participation in decision-making (PDM) and organizational commitment among the non-management professional staff. The Pearson product moment correlation was employed to test this hypothesis, as shown in Table 2. The data demonstrate that the relationships between measure of participation and organizational commitment ranges from high to moderate level and significant at $p < .001$. This finding supports data collected during the exploratory survey, where all the respondents agreed that participation in decision making is an important determinant of the extent to which they experience and maintain a sense of commitment to the organization.

Table 2: Moderated Regression Analyses of the effects of MGTAT and PDM on Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Independent Variables (interaction terms)	(RULES) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β	(REMAIN) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β	(EFFORT) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β	(PROFESS) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β
PARSOC (social decision areas) X **MGTAT** (superiors' attitudes toward PDM)	.362 .204 .681***	.422 .216 .199***	.344 .068 .695*	.318 .174 .390*
PARNEL (personnel decision areas) X **MGTAT** ((superiors' attitudes toward PDM)	.433 .154 .599*	.318 .158 .744**	.415 .041 .192*	.289 .083 .766*
PARECO (economic/strategic decision areas) X **MGTAT** ((superiors' attitudes toward PDM)	.481 .161 .198**	.433 .153 .338	.454 .167 .246**	.262 .165 .121

***p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

Non-managerial professionals in the PWD, like other employees, come to their organizations with certain needs, desires, and skills. Within their expect to find a work environment where they can utilize their abilities and satisfy many of their basic needs. If the PWD provides them with such a vehicle, the probability of developing commitment to the organization is enhanced. Within their terms participation in decision making seems to be significant to non-management professional staff in establishing their commitment to the organization. In essence, most individuals cannot establish a higher commitment level to the organization when the leadership excludes them from decision-making

processes in which they feel they have a stake or can make an important contribution (Agwu & Olele, 2014).

The data also indicate that the correlation indexes for association between the three measures of participation in decision making and commitment to effort (.7311; .7740; and .7962), commitment to develop professionally (.7088; .7257; and .7254), and commitment to rules (.6438; .6303; and .6589) are moderately high, while association with commitment to remain in the organization (.4426; .4849; .4341) is relatively low. These findings suggest that, when top managers in the PWD use participation in decision making as a management tool, they can inspire the non-management professional staff to express their commitment to the organization by exerting extra effort (EFFORT), pursue professional development (PROFESS), and be more compliant with rules and regulations established in the organization (RULES). However, among the non-management professional staff, participative mechanisms alone will not produce a strong desire to remain in the organization. For San professionals who work in public organizations, feelings about the pay, whether it is at a sufficient level (pay satisfaction) and compares favorably with a comparison group (pay equity), are a key determinant of desire to stay in the organization (Razali, 1993). To resolve the problem of "brain-drain" among professionals from the public to the private sectors, the Saudi policy makers would need to improve the present salary scheme.

Results of Regression Analysis for Interactive Effects

Multiple regression analysis is used to assess whether the variables specified in the model moderate the relationship between PDM and organizational commitment. The following discussion reports the results of the tests related to all dimensions of organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2 specified that *there is no significant relationships between participation in decision making (PDM) and organizational commitment for non-management professional staff who perceive their superiors have favorable attitudes toward PDM.* Table 3 shows results of the regression analysis to test this hypothesis. From the table it can be seen that, for non-management professionals who perceived their superiors were highly favorable toward PDM, increased participation in all the three areas (social, personnel, and economic/strategic) heightened all four measures of commitment (commitment to rules, commitment to remain in the organization, commitment to extra effort, and commitment to develop professionally). Conversely, increased participation in decision making reduced the level of commitment of respondents who perceived their superiors are not in favor of PDM.

It appears that one of the critical factors in establishing effective participation in the Public Works Department is the manager's values, particularly orientation toward subordinates. The orientation needed is a positive leadership style and a conviction that organizational

objectives can be achieved through increased employee involvement in the decision making process.

Table 3: Moderated Regression Analyses of the effects of COMPET and PDM on Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Independent Variables (interaction terms)	(RULES)			(REMAIN)			(EFFORT)			(PROFESS)		
	r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β
PARSOC (social decision areas) X **COMPET** (sense of competency)	.433	.005	.599	.318	.318	-.744***	.415	.204	.192**	.289	.220	.767**
PARNEL (personnel decision areas) X **COMPET** (sense of competency)	.303	.007	.425	.356	.345	-.647	.263	.098	.179***	.290	.095	.132*
PARECO (economic/strategic decision areas) X **COMPET** (sense of competency)	.335	.006	.509	.411	.179	-.352**	.204	.185	.178***	.295	.163	.439***

***p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

This finding is consistent with Christensen & Jonsson' study (2011), where the manager's predisposition towards participation and commitment to a participative approach is a significant factor in the participation/ organizational commitment relationship.

Hypothesis 3 postulated that *there is no significant relationship between participation in decision making (PDM) and organizational commitment for non-management professional staff who perceive they have a high competency level.* Results in Table 4 indicates that, for non-management professionals who perceived they have a high competency level increased participation in all three decision areas heightens their commitment to effort (social areas: R2 change = 204, Beta=.192, p < .01; personnel areas: R^2 change= .098, Beta=.179, p<.001; and economic/strategic areas: R^2 change=.185, Beta=.178, p< .(01), and commitment to develop professionally (social areas: R^2 change = .220, Beta= .767, p< .01; personnel areas: R^2 change =.095, Beta=.132, p< .05; and economic/strategic areas: R^2 change =.163, Beta= .439, p< .001). The data also show that the effects of this moderator variable on the relationships of all three measures of participation and commitment to remain in the organization (REMAIN) appear to be negative (social areas: R^2 change=.318, Beta= -.744, p<.001; personnel areas: R^2 change =245, Beta=-.647, p<.05; and economic/strategies; areas: R^2 change=.179, Beta=-352, p <.01). We can surmise from here that if the non-management professional staff believed they had a high competency level, increased participation in decision making would reduce their commitment to stay in the organization. 1bis group of employees tends to develop strong inclinations to search for other and better career

opportunities outside the present organization.

Table 4: Moderated Regression Analyses of the effects of ADVAN and PDM on Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Independent Variables (interaction terms)	(RULES) r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	(REMAIN) r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	(EFFORT) r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β	(PROFESS) r^2	$r^2\Delta$	β
PARSOC (social decision areas) X **ADVAN** (opportunities for advancement)	.480	.006	-.198	.455	.283	.133***	.455	.298	.117***	.362	.277	.121***
PARNEL (personnel decision areas) X **ADVAN** (opportunities for advancement)	.361	.006	-.762	.422	.184	.193*	.302	.206	.545**	.339	.201	.410*
PARECO (economic/strategic decision areas) X **ADVAN** (opportunities for advancement)	.326	.005	-.021	.453	.173	.272	.320	.157	.222*	.329	.142	.333*

***p<.001** p<.01 *   p<.05

Since people are not equal in the extent of their knowledge or intelligence, their willingness to participate in decision-making process will differ significantly.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that there is no significant relationship between participation in decision making CPDM) and organizational commitment for non-management professional staff who perceive they have high opportunities for career advancement. Table 5 shows that, for non-management professionals who perceive they have high opportunities for career advancement, increased participation in decision making in all three areas heightened their commitment to remain in the organization (social areas: R^2 change =.283, Beta=.133, p<.001; personnel areas: R^2 change=.184, Beta=.193, p<.05; and economic/strategic areas: R^2 change =.173, Beta=272, p< .05), commitment to effort (social areas: R^2 change =.298, Beta=.117, p < .001; personnel areas: R^2 change=.206, Beta=545,   p< .01; and economic/strategic areas: R^2 change=.157, Beta= 222, p< .05), and commitment to develop professionally (social areas: R^2 change =277, Beta=.121, p< .001; personnel areas: R^2 change=201. Beta=.410, p< .05; and economic/strategic areas: R^2 change =.142, Beta=.333, p<.05).

One important part of feeling appreciated and rewarded for one's efforts on behalf of the organization is having the opportunity to advance in the organization-to move up to greater responsibility and prestige as one gains knowledge and experience (Lane & Wolf, 1990) and Zhang and Bartol (2011). This finding to some extent corroborated the

exploratory survey data and other studies such as Razali (1991), and Balfour (1990). When employees perceive that there are more opportunities for career advancement, higher involvement in decision-making process enhances their commitment to the organization (Ahmadi & Emamipour, 2013). Unfortunately, in the case of the PWD, career upward mobility is beyond the department's jurisdiction. Promotions are controlled administratively by the Public Service Department (PSD), as prescribed by the Saudi Arabia Civil Service system.

Table 5: Moderated Regression Analyses of the effects of COMMU and PDM on Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Independent Variables (interaction terms)	(RULES) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β	(REMAIN) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β	(EFFORT) r^2 $^2\Delta$ β	(PROFESS) r^2 $r^2\Delta$ β
PARSOC (social decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.481 .315 .656***	.416 .309 .176***	.456 .213 .269**	.317 .183 .515**
PARNEL (personnel decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.383 .006 -.688	.420 .006 .199	.344 .005 -.693	.317 .005 -.394
PARECO (economic/strategic decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.400 .202 .425**	.356 .203 .646**	.263 .214 .795**	.306 .224 .251*

***p<.001 ** p<.01 *   p<.05

Other factors that aggravate this problem in Saudi Arabia public organizations are

the existence of many dead-end jobs, partly because of a common practice of filling many higher-level jobs by political appointment rather than through a merit system (Razali, 1993). Therefore, it is imperative for top management in the PWD to work with the PSD in formulating alternative mechanisms that create more opportunities for care.er advancement of non-management professionals.

Hypothesis 5 specified that *there is no significant relationship between participation in decision maaking (PDM) and organizational commitment for non-management professional staff who perceive they are highly satisfied with the communication process in the organization.* Table 6 presents the results of regression analysis concerning the moderator role of the communication process (COMMU) on participation/organizational commitment relationship.

Participation in decision making in social (PARSOC) and economic/strategic (PARECO) decision areas is positively related to all four measures of commitment for non-management professional staff who are highly satisfied with the communication process

in the organization. However, the relationship between participation in personnel decision areas (PARNEL) and all the commitment measures were not statistically significant.

Table 6: Moderated Regression Analyses of the effects of COMMU and PDM on Organizational Commitment Dimensions

Independent Variables (interaction terms)	(RULES)			(REMAIN)			(EFFORT)			(PROFESS)		
	r^2	$r^2 \Delta$	β	r^2	$r^2 \Delta$	β	r^2	$^2 \Delta$	β	r^2	$r^2 \Delta$	β
PARSOC (social decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.481	.315	.656***	.416	.309	.176***	.456	.213	.269**	.317	.183	.515**
PARNEL (personnel decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.383	.006	-.688	.420	.006	.199	.344	.005	-.693	.317	.005	-.394
PARECO (economic/strategic decision areas) X **COMMU** (communication process)	.400	.202	.425**	.356	.203	.646**	.263	.214	.795**	.306	.224	.251*

***$p<.001$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

When there is a more open communications in the organization, motivating subordinates to participate in the decision-making process will ultimately strengthen their commitment to the organization (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). This is congruent with evidence found in a series of doctoral dissertations completed at Purdue University, in which employees were found to be more willing to engage in decision-making efforts and to become more committed to the decision-making outcomes when communication was open between superiors and subordinates (Baird, 1984).

Recommendations

Since this study confines itself to a particular case in the PWD, it is inadvisable to generalize its findings to other settings indiscriminately. However, the researcher believes that some practical implications drawn from this study should be considered not only by managers in the PWD but also in other public organizations in Saudi Arabia.

Managerial considerations

It was shown that various organizational and individual/personality factors positively affect the relationship between participation and commitment (Scott-Ladd, Travalione & Marshall, 2006). For the practicing managers in the Public Works Department, as well as other public organizations in Saudi Arabia, who have the zeal and desire to implement participative management, it may be beneficial to recognize this relationship and the factors they may have overlooked or may not have been aware of, and to incorporate them in their strategy for implementing participative management. However, it is

important for the managers to recognize that PDM is only one of the factors that affect commitment.

Management education considerations

From the researcher's involvement and experience in teaching public administration or management curricula, there is need for a strong, clear educational effort by practitioners in both the public and private sectors in the country to integrate participative management ethics. Perhaps the Saudi Ministry of Education should form a task force at the national level, composed of professionals and educators and supported by various training agencies in Saudi, to help formulate more concrete teaching plans and strategies in this area.

Future Research considerations

Despite the fundamental importance of participation as an organizational phenomenon, far more questions than answers have been raised by research to date. One way to counteract this tendency is to utilize an ethnographic approach to research. In contrast to the positivist orientation of survey research, ethnography posits that "one learns while doing"; that is, understanding comes from actually "participating in the behavior" we are interested in studying.

Conclusion

Studies of employees' attitudes toward participation of different kinds and in various decision areas would provide a beginning. Such evidence would help Malaysian managers determine the nature and strength of the desire for participation among employees, and it would provide a starting point for developing and implementing participative systems. Moreover, such investigations should cover participation at all levels of organizational decision making, rather than-as in the case of this study-concentrating upon one group of employees

Acknowledgement

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