The mediating effect of self-efficacy on the relationships between learning organization and career advancement among academic employees in Hamadan, Iran

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to determine relationship between career advancement and learning organization through mediating effect of self-efficacy among academic employees in two public universities in Hamadan, Iran. A survey using a self-administered structured questionnaire was done among 307 randomly selected academics. The results show that learning organization and self- efficacy were significantly related to academic career advancement ($P<0.05$). The findings show self-efficacy has partially mediated the relationship between career advancement with learning organization ($P<0.05$). Therefore, universities may strength their academic self-efficacy to increase career advancement.

Keywords: Learning organization; Career advancement; Self-efficacy; Academic employees; Iran

1. Introduction

Learning is an important effort for all workers throughout their careers. As people progress in any career, they need to be able to continue to learn from experience. Learning organization is an organization that helps facilitate the learning of all its members and consciously modifies itself and affects its context (Campbell, 2000; Fay & Frese, 2001; Fay & Kamps, 2006). Ability to learn from experience is a predictor of career advancement (London & Maurer, 2004; Van Velsor, Moxley & Bunker, 2004). Career advancement can lead to productivity and success of educational centers and universities. Few studies have done to determine the factors related to career advancement in Iranian academic employees. They found out that having higher education level plays an important role in employees and advancement in their working life (Yousefy & Baratali, 2011; Ramazannia et al., 2010).

In recent years the number of tertiary education in Iran has been increasing. Most of universities and educational center have just hired employees with high education. However, it is not necessarily to bring satisfactions for employees with their work and career advancement (Hamidi et al., 2012; Najafi et al., 2011). Previous researches have done by Hamidi and Eivazi (2010) and Hazavehei and Samadi (2007) among employees in Hamadan University of Medical Sciences showed that most of the employees were dissatisfied with their jobs. That could be one of the reasons of growing number of psychological problems among college students (Parsa et al., 2014).

In other hand, self-efficacy has an impact on an individual's ways of thinking and emotional reactions. According to Garvin et al. (2008), a learning organization is "a place where employees excel at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge". Self-efficacy can also be explained as a person's self to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, high perceived of self-efficacy will most positively guide to increased advancement and success at the work. When compared to any other motivational construct, self-efficacy has confirmed to be good measurement to predict behavioral outcomes, especially in psychology and educational domain (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

In doing so, this study attempts to contribute to the career advancement literature by linking personal characteristics, work related factors and learning organizational. Thus the aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between learning organization, self-efficacy and career advancement among academic employees in two Hamadan universities. This study also examined the mediation effect of self-efficacy in the relationships between learning organization and career advancement.

2. Material and Methods

The survey method was carried out based on probability proportional sampling procedure. The questionnaires were administrated to 400 randomly selected academics (200 academics in Hamadan Medical Sciences University and 200 academics in Bu-Ali Sina University). However, only 307 questionnaires with complete information for all questions were returned (162 in HMSU and 145 in BSU). The components in the questionnaire included respondents' demography background, learning organization, self-efficacy and career advancement. Respondents provided their gender, age, marital status, household size, and job classification.

Learning Organization was assessed with the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) developed by Watkins and Marsick (1993, 2003). The seven dimensions in the DLOQ were measured by 21 items on a Five-point Likert-type scale. Respondents were asked to determine the extent to which each of the questions reflects their organization in the aspects of learning culture (1= almost never; 5 = almost always). Although the DLOQ is a relatively new instrument, it has been validated in several recent empirical studies (Ellinger et al, 2002; Watkins & Marsick, 2003; Yang, 2003; Song et al., 2009). The reliability test for total scale in present study was appropriate (Cronbach's alpha=.908) and for seven dimensions was as follows: Team learning (.741), Continues learning (.676), System connections (.860), Inquiry and dialogs (.796), Support leadership (.794), Embedded system (.847), Empowering people (.719).

This study used an Occupational Self-efficacy Scale (Schyns and Von Collani, 2002) which includes 8 items are rated on a six- point Likert-type scale: "not at all true=1" to "exactly true=6". Higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived occupational self-efficacy. Reliability of the scale has been demonstrated in a previous study (Schyns and Von Collani 2002). In present study the reliability was at desirable level (alpha= .899).

The career advancement scale was developed by Weng and Hu (2009) to measure the four dimensions including: career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth. In present study, the reliability of total scale was good (Cronbach's alpa=.890). The coefficient alphas for career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth were at desirable level as: **.**782, .849, .746 and .923, respectively. The convergent validity of the measurement models were tasted by utilizing average variance extracted (AVE) and construct reliability

(CR). A high AVE value which is represented by a value that is (AVE>.5) greater than .5 indicates that the latent variables have adequate and acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010; Ford et al., 1986). Reliability value that is between .6 and .7 can be accepted if other indicators of the construct validity are good (Hair et al., 2010). CR for learning organization, self-efficacy and career advancement was .97, .60 and .95, respectively. So, all variables have good construct reliability (Table 1). The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used for data analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, construct validity and correlations (n=307).

Latent Constructs	Mean	SD	AVE	CR	X1	X2	Y
LO (X1)	55.11	10.91	.58	.97	1		
Self-eff. (X2)	29.25	6.50	.52	.60	.35**	1	
C A (Y)	37.88	9.87	.57	.95	.51**	.50**	1

*P<.05;
** P<.01

3. Results

As shown in Table 1, there were significant correlation between career advancement with learning organization (r=.51, p<0.01), career advancement with self-efficacy (r=.50, p<.01), learning organization with self-efficacy (r=.35, p<.01) .

Table 2, represents personal and professional profiles of the respondents. The mean age (standard deviation) of the respondents was 39.67 (7.4) years. The proportion of female was almost same as male, (44.6 % female and 55.4% male). The majority (83.4%) of the respondents were married. For those who were married, 27.7% had no children; the majority (66.8%) reported having 1-2 children. Only 5.57% have 3-4 children, which reveals that majority of the respondents have small family sizes. In terms of educational level, about 30.3% possessed a Master of Science (M Sc) degree and 69.7% had Doctoral degree (Ph D, Medical Specialist). It should be noted that the academics' service scheme has set the minimum requirement of M Sc. degree as the entrance qualification into the service scheme. However, during their services, academics are encouraged to pursue their post-graduate studies.

About 31.3% of respondents have organizational tenure of less than 5 years, 31.3% have between 6 to 15 years, and another 37.4 % have 16 years or more organizational experience. Most of respondents were assistant professor (55.4%) followed by inspector (31.6%), associate professor (11.1%). The academics' monthly gross incomes

were categorized based on U S Dollars. The monthly gross incomes ranged between USD 520 to 2160, with mean (standard deviation) was 1259.08 (467.3).

A shown in Table 3, there was a significant relationship between learning organization and career advancement in a direct model (ßeta=.381, p=.000). In addition, the mediation model showed a significant relationship between learning organization and self-efficacy (ßeta=.202, p=.023).

Table2. Professional and processional characteristics of respondents (*n*=307).

Professional and Processional Characteristics	Freq.	%	Mean (SD)	Min-Max
Age (year)				
26-35	106	34.5	39.67	26-56
36-45	118	38.4	(7.4)	
>46	83	27.0		
Gender				
Female	137	44.6		
Male	170	55.4		
Marital status				
Single	51	16.6		
Married	256	83.4		
Educational level				
M Sc	93	30.3		
Ph D	214	69.7		
University				
HUMS	162	52.8		
BASU	145	47.2		
Work experience				
<5 (year)	96	31.3	11.63	2-25
6-15	96	31.3	(7.2)	
>16	115	37.5		
Academic level				
Inspector	97	31.6		
Assic. Prof.	170	55.4		
Assoc. Prof.	34	11.1		
Professor	6	2.0		
Academic's track				
Science	249	81.1		
Clinical	58	18.9		
Monthly Gross Incomes (USD*)	115	37.5	1259.08	520-2160
500-1000	178	58.0	(467.3)	
1001-2000	14	4.6		
>2001				

* 1 USD= 25000 Rials (Iran currency)

Also, Table 3 reveals that there was a significant relationship between self-efficacy and career advancement (ßeta=.185, p=.008). In addition, there is also a significant relationship between learning organization and career advancement trough mediating effect of self-efficacy (ßeta=.343, p=.000). Thus, based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, the results support that self-efficacy significantly and partially mediated the relationship between learning organization and career advancement.

Table 3. Mediation effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between learning organization and career advancement (n=307).

Hypothesized patch	b	SE	Beta	CR	p
Direct model					
LO ⟶ CA	.496	.126	.381	3.928	.000
Mediation model					
LO ⟶ SE	.122	.050	.202	2.265	.023
SE ⟶ CA	.400	.151	.185	2.648	.008
LO ⟶ CA	.449	.123	.343	3.640	.000

LO: Learning organization
SE: Self-efficacy
CA: Career advancement

3. Discussions

The results of the study supported this idea that higher learning organization lead to higher career advancement. Similarly, in the study of learning organization disciplines on faculty members at the Hashemite University in Jordan by Khasawneh (2010), results shows overall moderate-to-high application of learning organization disciplines in a university setting. According to Watkins and Marsick (1993) changes in organizations, the changing nature of work, changes in the workforce and changes in how people learn, are forces compelling organizations to shift learning organization. In overall, organizations cannot survive and improve themselves with their previous knowledge and need to learn in order to strive hard to overcome the chaotic and changing conditions (Hannah & Lester, 2009).

The outcome shows that having higher learning organization characteristics in an organization related with higher level of self-efficacy among employees in their work related tasks. Perceived self - efficacy is a leading predictor of career advancement. According to Lent et al. (1994), the higher individual's perceived efficacy to accomplish learning necessities and work-related roles is associate with the wider the career options, the greater interests they have in them, the better they prepare themselves for different job-related careers, and the greater their staying power in difficult career pursuit (Lent et al., 1994).

This finding supports a conceptual study from Lent et al. (2000) who believed that through the learning organization, employees get more self-efficacy. Self-efficacious employees take greater initiative in their occupational self-development and produce ideas that help to promote work processes. In other hand, learning organizations that provide employees with mastery experiences, valuable co-workers relationships, and enabling performance

feedback improve employees 'self-efficacy, job satisfaction, well-being, and productivity (Bandura, 2001; Saks, 1995).

The results of the path analysis showed that self-efficacy and career advancement was significantly and positively related. Similarly, longitudinal research confirms that the social cognitive career model provides a good fit to the empirical evidence on career outcome (Bandura, 2001). Day and Allen (2004) found that individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be actively involved in development and learning activities, thus are more likely to engage in and benefit more from advancement.   Abele and Spurk (2009) in a longitudinal study stated the impact of employees' self-efficacy on career advancement. They have found that occupational self-efficacy measured at career entry had a positive impact on salary and status three years later and a positive impact on salary change and career satisfaction seven years later. However, career enhancing strategies that can be used by employees are subject to factors such as the type of job or occupational group and the nature of the organization (Nabi, 1999). Successful career strategies may have depended on structural characteristics of the organization (Riordan, 2007).

4. Conclusions

The nature of self-efficacy as a mediator implied that career advancement of academic employees can be improve if these persons believe their self-abilities and do not experience insecurity at their workplace. Therefore, academics need to be equipped with appropriate skills and having a learning organization to increase academics' self-efficacy and promote their career advancement.

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