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**THE EFFECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT ON
WORK LIFE QUALITY**

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Abstract

This research was carried out on 252 public service employees in İstanbul to investigate the psychological empowerment, work life quality levels and the impact of psychological empowerment on work life quality and its subdimensions which are work environment, working conditions and perception of the services provided. The data were obtained through survey method. Factor analysis, validity analysis and reliability analysis, scale averages of the obtained data analysis and regression analysis were performed using the SPSS21 program. As a result of the study; the psychological empowerment of the participant employees, their overall work life quality, work environment and level of the working conditions were found to be high, while level of the services provided to them was found to be moderate. As another result of the study; it was also found that psychological empowerment was an explanatory factor for the change in the level of work life quality, working conditions and services provided.

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Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Work Life Quality.



1. Introduction

In today's business world where competition increases rapidly, the bases on which depends the superiority also change. Organizations have come to realize that success is not only based on factors such as research and development, modern marketing and technology; but rather it depends on the philosophy of 'human first'.

In the changing, developing and globalizing world, one of the new management approaches that companies implement in order to keep pace with the developments that are happening in the near and distant circles is strengthening their staff. With the increasing importance of the "human first" philosophy; organizations have grown interested in subjects such as psychological empowerment and the promotion of the quality of work life. Businesses need people who can think creatively and produce original ideas. Psychological empowerment provide employees a job satisfaction and an environment where they can take responsibility for their works by allowing them to decide for the work they do. In this study, it is aimed to determine the levels of work life quality and psychological empowerment of employees who provide public service, and the effect of psychological empowerment on work life quality is investigated.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Psychological Empowerment

Employee is defined as someone who can motivate himself and who has the ability to perform a work without being supervised (Wilkinson, 1998). In the new organizational structures, therefore in the learning community cultures, "empowerment" has a central position. This understanding can help employees in lower statuses in the organization develop a commonsense about decision-making and build informal learning partnerships that enable them to produce new products, services and methods to respond to the environmental changes that come with the time (Richardson, 1995). According to Erstad (1997), empowerment is providing opportunities that will enable the employees to make decisions about the work they do and providing an organizational environment where they can take the responsibility of their individual activities. According to Pardo and Lloyd (2003), it is the direct and immediate participation of the organization members, both administrators and employees, to the decision-making process.

The main factors for a successful employee empowerment implementation are organization, execution and employees. In order to implement the employee empowerment in a business; first, there should be a proper organizational structuring that will respond to the requirements of empowerment activities. Employee empowerment requires a plain organizational structuring in which employees will participate the work process in its every step by being the owner of their own work, and take every decision about it autonomously according to the understanding that "a work is known best by who does it" (Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008, pp. 56-57).

As employee empowerment activities require a structure where the administrators share authority and responsibility with the employees, it needs a different administrator profile other than its classical definition (Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008). It is hard to achieve success in employee empowerment if it becomes a target that is established by top executives for the organizational goals only and doesn't consider

the expectations and desires of the employees who are supposed to be the main focus in the empowerment process (Koçel, 2003).

Two main prior conditions are suggested in employee empowerment, which are "conditions about power and control" and " conditions about participation and trust" (Foster, Pennie, & Keys, 1997, p. 35). The employee empowerment approaches that can be implemented if these conditions are met can be observed in three levels, which are "simple", "operational" and "high" (Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008, p. 58).

Researchers define staff empowerment as internal task motivation which is explained by four dimensions, expressed in a single concept and reflecting the orientation of the individual to the role of the work. These four dimensions are meaning, competence, autonomy and influence (Kenneth & Velthouse, 1990). Spreitzer (1995) take *meaning* from these dimensions as the engine of empowerment. If the heart of an employee is not in alignment with his business, or the business activities are in conflict with his values, then he will not be feeling empowered. The second dimension, competence, is an individual's awareness of his skills about how he can perform his work better, which is so crucial that if he cannot realize it, he will feel insufficient and weak. The third dimension is making one's own decisions, decision latitude of oneself about his own work. If the decisions about his work are taken by somebody else in a hierarchical system, the individual will consider himself less independent and less autonomous, which will lead him to feel powerless. The last dimension is influence, which can be explained as an individual's power to make a change in the organization (Spreitzer, 1995).

2.2. Work Life Quality

While Levine (1984) define work life quality as ‘‘employees’ reaching to their expectations towards their life quality in the work environment’’ (p. 81). Özkalp and Kirel (2001) define it as providing their needs so that they can maintain their work life in a safe environment, making them feel useful for the work they are performing and providing a work environment where they are given the opportunity to discover and improve their abilities. Other than that, work life quality is also defined as ‘‘an administration philosophy which honors all employees, making them feel good both physically and emotionally and providing opportunities for growth and development’’ (Elma & Demir, 2003, p. 204).

2.2.1. Work Environment

Work environment encompasses issues such as suitability of the work to one's abilities and expectations, compliance of individual goals to the workplace goals, equilibrium of competence and responsibilities, prestige in the society thanks to one's work and satisfaction in the workplace (Walker et al., 2009). The more the quality of services provided to the employees increases, the higher the satisfaction in a workplace becomes (Aba, 2009). According to Tuncer and Yeşiltaş (2013), employees expect ‘‘an improvement for their own good from their businesses’’ and think that this is ‘‘a necessity of social responsibility’’ (p. 73). The presence of social spaces for recreational needs of the employee, increases the perception of life quality of the employees (Parmaksız et al., 2013). Social facilities and activities are included in the psycho-social tools used to motivate the employee. Employees' participation to the social and sport activities in their spare time, on one hand, can help them relieve the work stress they experience, and on the other hand, can motivate the employees in a positive way (Özler, 2013) Such social activities

help employees socialize both among themselves and with the managers, make them love their work and become committed to it (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2008).

2.2.2. Working Conditions

According to Walker and his team (2009), working conditions includes working hours, work and leave applications, physical conditions of the working environment, social activities in the workplace and the endeavors of businesses for organizational growth and development. Improvement of the working conditions is one of the tools of administrative and organizational motivation, and the physical working conditions include anything that interacts with the physical environment where the employee works (Aba, 2009). Physical conditions is one of the most important factors for many people in the decision-making of job switching. Making efforts for improving the physical conditions within the organization and asking the employee's opinions about the matter holds great importance (Özler, 2013).

2.2.3. Services Provided

As the quality of the services provided to the employees increases, the satisfaction with the work environment increases as well (Aba, 2009) According to Tuncer and Yeşiltaş (2013), employees expect "an improvement for their own good from their businesses" and think that this is "a necessity of social responsibility" (p. 73). The presence of social spaces for recreational needs of the employee, increases the perception of life quality of the employees (Parmaksız et al., 2013). Social facilities and activities are included in the psycho-social tools used to motivate the employee. Employees' participation to the social and sport activities in their spare time, on one hand, can help them relieve the work stress they experience, and on the other hand, can motivate the employees in a positive way (Özler, 2013). Such social activities help employees socialize both among themselves and with the managers, make them love their work and become committed to it (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2008). Within the scope of the subdimensions of the services provided, it is possible to talk about catering services, communication and transportation facilities, and social facilities and activities (Walker et al., 2009).

2.3. The Relation Between Psychological Empowerment and Work Life Quality

Psychological empowerment increases the perception of justice in the employees, and the perception of justice, in turn, influences the levels of psychological empowerment in a positive way (Yürür & Demir, 2011).

Employee empowerment is an important management approach that will improve the work life quality. Ensuring that employees work in their workplaces with higher motivation, providing them a job satisfaction, giving them an opportunity to have a word in the decisions about themselves or the work they do, making them feel secure and increasing their commitment levels towards the organization and the work they perform can be achieved through employee empowerment (Demirbilek & Türkan, 2008).

Arı and Ergeneli (2017) found a strong correlation between psychological empowerment and organizational commitment, while Karakaş and Serçek (2014) found a moderate and statistically significant relationship in them; and they both concluded that empowerment influences commitment.

A significant relationship was found in the positive direction between the perceptions of structural and psychological empowerment of teachers and their external and internal motivation levels. According to the results of multiple regression analysis, structural and psychological empowerment is a significant explanatory variable in the motivation level of teachers (İhtiyaroğlu, 2017).

It is stated that employees who believed that they were psychologically empowered were influenced positively in terms of organizational citizenship behaviors. In this respect, it could be recommended to the hotel managers that they should increase the believes of psychological empowerment of their employees so that they can increase their behaviors that will contribute to the organizational productivity beyond their roles (Akgündüz et al., 2015). Productivity, innovation and strategic contribution of the employees to the work place as a result of their work life quality mean that they feel psychologically and intellectually satisfied and consider themselves worthy (Türkay, 2015). It is observed that there is significant relationship between work life quality and employee empowerment in terms of the goal and effect relationship. The following hypotheses and research model, also shown in Figure 01, were developed according to the above literature findings.

- H1: Psychological empowerment has influence on the level of work environment.
- H2: Psychological empowerment has influence on the level of working conditions.
- H3: Psychological empowerment has influence on the level of services provided.
- H4: Psychological empowerment has influence on the level of general work life quality.

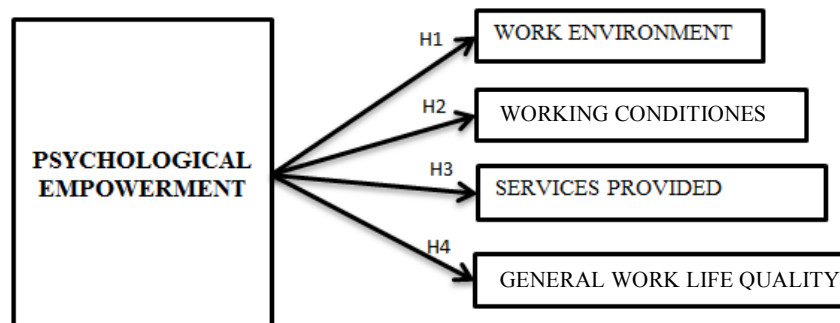


Figure 01. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Work Life Quality Initial Model Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

The aim of the research is to investigate the effect of the level of Psychological Empowerment on the level of Work Life Quality.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The employees who provide public services in Istanbul constitute the research universe, while the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality employees constitute the sample of the research. The data were obtained through surveys prepared by using scales whose validity and reliability were previously tested. Convenience sampling method was used in data collection. The fact that it is conducted on employees of one instituion only and it is limited to the year 2015 constitutes the constraint of the research.

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3.4. Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 21.0 program was used for the explanatory factor analysis and the regression modeling of the data obtained in the study. Statistical evaluation was based on number, percentage, average and standard deviation. Findings were evaluated at 95% confidence interval and at 5% significance level.

3.5. Research Scales

The information on the Work Life Quality and Psychological Empowerment scales used in the research are given below.

3.4.1. Work Life Quality Scale

In the research, work life quality was measured by a scale developed by Walker and his team (2009). The reliability and validity analysis of the adaptation of the scale to Turkish was made by Aba (2009). The scale consists of three subdimensions. Among them are the Work Life Quality subdimension (7 items), Working Conditions subdimension (5 items) and Services Provided subdimension (3 items). The factor load of the scale and the validity and reliability analysis were recalculated. The general reliability of the 15 items in the work life quality scale was found to be $\alpha=0,884$. Since items 11 and 12 of the scale affected the internal consistency negatively, it was not included into the evaluation phase. It was found suitable for the factor analysis as the KMO value was $0,876 > 0,600$ and the Barlett test value was smaller than 0,05. As a result of the factor analysis, shown below in Table 01, 3 factors were formed whose total variance value was 63.03%.

Table 01. Work Life Quality Scale Factor Structure

Factor	Item	Factor Load	Explanatory Variance	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	General C. Alpha
Working Environment	İYK2	0,817	26,831	0,886	0,876	0,884
	İYK7	0,797				
	İYK5	0,754				
	İYK3	0,732				
	İYK6	0,701				
	İYK1	0,673				
	İYK4	0,645				
Working Conditions	İYK9	0,698	19,913	0,769	0,876	0,884
	İYK8	0,771				
	İYK10	0,746				
Services Provided	İYK13	0,712	16,29	0,724	0,876	0,884
	İYK15	0,665				
	İYK14	0,618				
Total Variance: % 63,034						

3.4.2. Psychological Empowerment Scale

The psychological empowerment scale used in the research was taken from Royer's (2009) study. Its adaptation to Turkish was made by Yücel and Demirel (2012, 31-32) and it was adapted through selection of 12 questions out of 26 questions covering the research topic. The general reliability of the 12 items in the psychological empowerment scale was found to be $\alpha=0,887$. The KMO value was $0,825 > 0,600$ and the Barlett test value was less than 0,05. As a result of the factor analysis, shown below in Table 02, the items were gathered under 4 factors, which were "meaning, competence, autonomy and influence" whose total variance was %71,04.

Table 02. Psychological Empowerment Factor Structure

Dimension	Item	Factor Load	Explanatory Variance	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	General C. Alpha
Meaning	Work related activities are meaningful for me on an individual level.	0,818	24,813	0,927	0.825	0,887
	The work that I do is meaningful for me.	0,798				
	The work that I do is very important for me.	0,755				
Competence	I am sure that I have enough competence to achieve my work.	0,826	19,774	0,815		
	I am sure that I have enough skills to achieve my work.	0,782				
	I have developed the necessary skills for my work over time.	0,761				
Autonomy	The right to make decisions about my work is largely mine.	0,851	15,622	0,846		
	I am given opportunities about performing my work independently and freely.	0,825				
	I decide about how I will conduct my work myself.	0,807				
Influence	I have considerable influence on what happens in the department that I work.	0,799	10,835	0,934		
	I can largely control what happens in the department that I work.	0,772				
	I can significantly influence everything that happens in the department that I work.	0,747				
Total Variance % 71,044						

4. Findings

In this section, the levels of psychological empowerment and the work life quality of the employees (Table 3) and the regression models that show the impact of psychological empowerment upon work life quality (Table 4) are presented.

4.1. Psychological Empowerment and Work Life Quality Levels

When the averages of the levels of psychological empowerment and work life quality of the employees who participated in the research are examined, it is observed in Table 03 that the average level

‘‘working environment’’ was ‘‘high (3,585 ± 0,796)’’; the average level of ‘‘working conditions’’ was ‘‘high (3,778 ± 0,804)’’, the average level of ‘‘services provided’’ was ‘‘moderate (3,261 ± 0,916)’’, the average level of ‘‘general work life quality’’ was ‘‘high (3,555 ± 0,686)’’ and the average level of ‘‘psychological empowerment’’ was ‘‘high (3,927 ± 0,628)’’.

Table 03. Psychological empowerment and work life quality level averages

	N	Avg.	Ss	Min.	Max.
Work Environment	252	3,585	0,796	1,000	5,000
Working Conditions	252	3,778	0,804	1,000	5,000
Services Provided	252	3,261	0,916	1,000	5,000
General Work Life Quality	252	3,555	0,686	1,000	5,000
Psychological Empowerment	252	3,927	0,628	1,830	5,000

4.2. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Work Environment

A regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate the cause effect relationship between psychological empowerment and work environment. The model obtained was found to be statistically significant ($F=151,767$; $p=0,000<0.05$). The explanatory power of the model is high ($R^2=0,375$). The regression model in Table 04 (Model A) show that psychological empowerment is the explanatory factor for the %37,5 of the change in the level of ‘‘work environment’’ ($\beta=0,615$; $p=0,000$). According to this result, as it is seen in Figure 02, H1 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4. The impact of psychological empowerment on the work life quality dimensions

Regression Model	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β	t	p	F	R^2
A	Constant	Work Environment	0,526	2,090	0,038	151,767	0,375
	Psychological Empowerment		0,615	12,319	0,000		
B	Constant	Working Conditions	1,928	6,439	0,000	39,110	0,132
	Psychological Empowerment		0,368	6,254	0,000		
C	Constant	Services Provided	1,316	3,817	0,000	32,594	0,112
	Psychological Empowerment		0,340	5,709	0,000		
D	Constant	General Work Life Quality	1,032	4,648	0,000	132,463	0,344
	Psychological Empowerment		0,589	11,509	0,000		

4.3. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Working Conditions

A regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate the cause effect relationship between psychological empowerment and work conditions. The model obtained was found to be statistically significant ($F=39,110$; $p=0,000<0.05$). The model has an explanatory power ($R^2=0,132$). The regression model in Table 4 (Model B) show that psychological empowerment is the explanatory factor for the %13,2 of the change in the level of ‘‘working conditions’’ ($\beta=0,368$; $p=0,000$). According to this result, as it is seen in Figure 2, H2 hypothesis is accepted.

4.4. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Services Provided

A regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate the cause effect relationship between psychological empowerment and services provided. The model obtained was found to be statistically significant. ($F=32,594$; $p=0,000<0.05$). The model has an explanatory power ($R^2=0,112$). The regression model in Table 4 (Model C) show that psychological empowerment is the explanatory factor for the %11,2 of the change in the level of “services provided” ($\beta=0,340$; $p=0,000$). According to this result, as it is seen in Figure 2, H3 hypothesis is accepted.

4.5. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on General Work Life Quality

A regression analysis was conducted in order to investigate the cause effect relationship between psychological empowerment and “general work life quality”. The model obtained was found to be statistically significant ($F=132,463$; $p=0,000<0.05$). The explanatory power of the model is high ($R^2=0,344$). The regression model in Table 4 (Model D) show that psychological empowerment is the explanatory factor for the %34,4 of the change in the level of “general work life quality” ($\beta=0,589$; $p=0,000$). According to this result, as it is seen in Figure 2, H4 hypothesis is accepted.

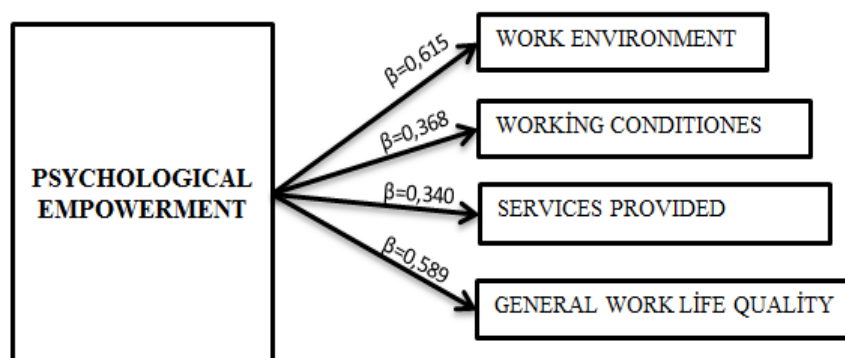


Figure 02. The Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Work Life Quality Dimensions Result Model

5. Conclusion and Discussion

As the result of the research, it is concluded that psychological empowerment through giving meaning to the work performed, enhancing the competence of employees, providing opportunities for autonomy and independent performance, making the employees effective concerning the work they perform, has an impact on both work life quality in general and at the same time on its dimensions such as work environment, working conditions and services provided. In other words, psychological empowerment is an explanatory factor for the changes in the work life quality, though with various ratios, and its subdimensions.

In the other studies about psychological empowerment, it is observed that psychological empowerment influences the perception of justice in employees (Yürür & Demir, 2011), organizational commitment (Arı & Ergenel, 2017), organizational citizenship (Akgündüz et al., 2015) and motivation levels of teachers (İhtiyaroğlu, 2017: 361); and the positive effect seen in these studies show similarities with the findings of this research. Also Türkay's (2015, pp. 239-240) statement that “ It is a result of Work

Life Quality that employees consider themselves valuable and they experience an intellectual and psychological satisfaction out of it'' supports the findings of this research.

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