

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, SUPERVISOR'S SUPPORT AND EMPOWERMENT WITH JOB ATTITUDES AND CIVIL-ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS OF STAFF AT ISFAHAN ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY

Sana Safari<sup>1</sup> and Simin Naghsh<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *The study was carried out aimed at investigating the relationship between professional development, supervisor's support and empowerment with job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors. The current research is considered as practical in terms of the objective, it is quantitative in terms of the data, and it is a descriptive analysis in terms of the nature and method (non-experimental) and it's a correlation as well. The statistical population of the study consists of over 550 staff of the Islamic Azad University of Isfahan, of which 225 people were selected using Morgan table. And they were asked to fill (Ackfelt and Coote, 2005)'s questionnaires entitled civil-organizational behaviors, job attitudes, professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support. To ensure the validity of the content of the questionnaires the views and ideas of 10 professors and relevant experts were collected and its reliability was calculated by Alpha Cronbach  $\alpha:0/93$ . SPSS software was used to analyze data for descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and simultaneous regression). The results showed that professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support and job attitudes (satisfaction and commitment) enjoy a positive and significant relationship, but only empowerment and supervisor's support has a positive and significant relationship with civil-organizational behaviors. The results also showed that professional development and empowerment would predict about 32 and 21 percent of the increase in job attitudes and the supervisor's support would predict 16 percent of civil-organizational behaviors of the staff.*

**Keywords:** *Professional development, supervisor support, empowerment, job attitudes, civil behaviors, staff.*

---

<sup>1.</sup> PhD in Higher Education Management, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payamenoor University, PO Box 19395 -3697 Theran, IR of IRAN

<sup>2.</sup> PhD student in planning distance education. Department of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Payamenoor University, PO Box 193953697 Theran, IR of IRAN

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of numerous organizations to meet the needs of the people of the society is considered among progresses and fundamental changes in all aspects of life, including economic, cultural, political and social aspects. The emergence of organizations led the human being to become an active element in growth, development and evolution. Organizations continue to rely on human resources and to comment on the organization without paying attention to its constituent manpower is incomplete. On the other hand, the rapid changes in today's volatile world make flexibility an essential factor for organizations to secure their survival. For any organization to survive it is essential to adapt to changes in accordance with the purposes, structure, work procedures and their behavioral patterns. And this could be possible through competency development, efficiency, effectiveness and the staff capabilities. To achieve this goal, education and professional knowledge, interest in research, and innovation should be considered as criteria for staff expertise work (Karimi, 2006).

Psychology and the management of people's behavior in various environments, including work environments require paying attention to the role and hierarchy of different variables simultaneously. Civil-organizational behaviors are among the critical behaviors in the workplace, institutions and organizations. Civil behaviors consist of a set of optional behaviors which are not included in the people's formal job responsibilities' description. There is also no legal obligation and formal compulsion for them and the staff compensation system provides no specific topic for such behaviors (Golparvar and Rafi Zadeh, 2010). The most obvious of the instances of this type of behavior include helping, sportsmanship and civic virtues (Golparvar and Rafi Zadeh, 2009).

More attention is paid to such behaviors because doing them through a proper social and psychological atmosphere in the workplace will result in the promotion of individual, group and organizational performance (Golparvar, Vakili and Atashpour, 2009).

Hence, theorists and researchers of various fields have over the past two to three decades seriously tried to identify and introduce the most effective variables concerning the job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors for the work organizations and bodies to use them to promote the level of these behaviors in their working environment and thereby increase their organizational and work effectiveness (Golparvar and Bilali, 2000). However, there is a positive relationship between the job attitudes including job satisfaction and civil-organizational behaviors, (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Accordingly, it has been tried to explain the

knowledge on how to improve the attitude and behavior of staff at Isfahan Islamic Azad University "as a policy-maker in the Islamic Azad University," in this study.

The issue of professional development of employees was first used by Gardner (2000) who was the director of professional development at York University. Professional development of employees is considered to be an ongoing process to improve the performance of employees in civic and educational standards for all employees, in which the capacity of all staff in order to increase their lifelong learning (Ganser, 2000). In other words, professional development of employees in a broad sense refers to the growth of people in their professional role, (Shahpasand, 2010; Glathorm, 2007). The concept of professional development has been used in this study as one of the variables affecting job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors.

The supervisor's support constitutes one of the other variables affecting job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors. The supervisor support or leadership refers to the degree of support and attention received by employees from their supervisors (Netemeyer et al., 1997). A supportive manager or supervisor enjoys a high degree of competence in organizations and industries. Such a manager treats his employees with fairness and justice and encourages a bilateral relationship between him and the employees and appreciates each employee's contribution.

Those employees who work with supportive managers and supervisors are more likely to trust their managers and to more effectively participate in team works and pay more interests toward achieving the goals of the organization (Walumbwa & Orva, 2008; Roberson, 2006). Thus, to provide suitable job attitudes in the workplace it seems essential for supervisors and managers to support the staff. This is in line with the way it is going to be examined in this study between the leadership support and job attitudes.

Empowerment as another effective element in the civil-organizational behaviors and job attitude will actually be fulfilled in the staff when the manager or supervisor gives them the required opportunity to make work-related decisions. However, the main axis of these two concepts also returns significantly to the decision-making power and the use of personal initiative the supervisor gives the staff. According to Bowen and Lawler (1992) empowered employees (i.e. those who have freedom and autonomy in their career to use their own initiative in making decisions) enjoy a better ability in different areas (especially in the areas of products and services) to respond to their work and job requirements and have a better feeling about themselves and their jobs.

Job attitudes which play a key role as one of the examined variables in this study directly affect civil-organizational behaviors. The most important job attitudes in the field of organizational studies are job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction is defined as a general state of the employees' emotions which emanate from evaluating all aspects of their jobs (Ackfelt and Coote, 2005). Organizational commitment refers to the belief that every individual attaches importance to membership in the organization. Such an importance creates sort of emotional attachment to the organization among employees (Hartline et al., 2000). This definition is more based on an emotional commitment beyond that in which background researches in the management field found a positive relationship between job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors in the meta-analysis they carried out. Accordingly, one could say that the employees who are satisfied with their jobs and enjoy the sense of belonging and commitment to their organizations are more likely to engage in civil-organizational behaviors.

Civil behaviors are considered as a set of behaviors which are out of the scope of the people's essential behaviors in the environment. But they play a pivotal role in creating a favorable social and psychological climate in the workplace. These behaviors have turned to an extensive field for managerial and organizational researches at least in the past 25 years (Blakely et al. 2005). These behaviors are introduced in the first definitions as fully optional behaviors for which no positions have been considered for them in the pay and salary system of the organizations and industries. However, these behaviors play a basic role in organizational effectiveness due to the role they play in the organizational climate. In fact, these behaviors facilitate the collaboration needed to perform the duties and functions of the organization. The results obtained from comprehensive studies, such as the conducted meta-analysis studies have seriously supported the link between professional development, supervisor's support and empowerment with job attitudes (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Ackfelt and Coote, 2005). The theoretical underpinning of chaining professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support with job attitudes is well discussable through social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory people are influenced by interactive mode of operation in terms of feelings, emotions and cognition (Golparvar and Bilali, 2010). As a result when an organization provides the field for professional growth, empowerment and supervisor's support because of these opportunities for growth and development and support given to the growth and prosperity, people are more satisfied with their jobs and feel more committed to their organization (Golparvar and Rafi Zadeh, 2009). But as the staff job attitude strengthens in terms of commitment and satisfaction, people tend to retaliate (which is one of the important principles in the social exchange theory), through

positive compensative behaviors, compensating supervisor's compassion and the organization for professional development, empowerment and supervisor support in the form of civil-organizational behaviors. Dalal(2005), in his meta-analysis and the results of several other meta-analyses he has provided, clearly shows that satisfaction and commitment as the most important job attitudes enjoy a positive and significant relationship with civil-organizational behaviors. Since it is a very important issue, in this study we are going to answer this main question whether there is a relationship between professional development, supervisor's support and empowerment with job attitudes and civil-organizational behaviors of the staff of Isfahan Islamic Azad University.

## **METHOD**

This study is considered as practical in terms of the objective and since there would be no specific meddling as far as the research's variables are concerned the method of research is descriptive (non-experimental). And since the relationship between professional development, supervisor's support and empowerment with job attitudes and the employees' civil behaviors is examined, the descriptive research is a correlation. To ensure the validity of the content, the opinion and views of 10 professors and relevant experts have been used and its reliability was calculated by Alpha Cronbach  $\alpha = 0/93$ . SPSS software was used to analyze data for descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and simultaneous regression).

### **Population, Sample and Sampling Methods**

The statistical population of the study consisted of over 550 staff of Isfahan Islamic Azad University. To select the sample, a multi-stage random cluster sampling is used from among which 225 people were picked using the Morgan Table.

### **Research Tools, its Reliability and Validity**

To examine the study's variables a questionnaire consisting of 13 questions was used to assess civil-organizational behaviors.

A questionnaire consisting of 9 questions was also used to evaluate job attitudes and questionnaires consisting of 6,5 and 5 questions were used to assess professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support introduced by Akfelt and Coote (2005). To ensure the validity of the content of the questionnaires the views of 10 professors and relevant experts have been included and their reliability was calculated by Alpha Cronbach  $\alpha=0/93$ .

## Findings

**Table 1**  
Descriptive indicators of the study's variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
Professional development	1.00	6.67	3.6614	1.27832	-593	.939
Empowerment	1.00	7.00	3.8868	1.44571	-504	.258
Supervisor support	1.00	7.00	3.8000	1.44388	-652	.221
Job attitudes	1.00	6.67	3.9789	1.43831	-652	.065
Civil-organizational behaviors	1.85	6.42	4.2936.	1.10231	1.441-	3.723

According to Table 1, the distribution of scores for all variables has a negative skew. In other words, the study's cubictotal scores from the mean is a negative figure and most of the people's grades are lower than the mean. The distribution of grades for civil-organizational behaviors has the most skew while the distribution of grades for empowerment has the lowest skew.

The distribution of all the variables of the study enjoys a positive kurtosis. This means that the grades of majority of the people on this scale are close to the mean. The distribution of civil-organizational behaviors enjoys the maximum kurtosis while the distribution of job attitudes (commitment) has the lowest elongation.

**Table 2**  
Pearson correlation coefficient results for discussing the relationship between the variables

<i>Independent variable's name</i>	<i>Dependent variable's name</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Professional development	Job attitude	531/0**	0.001	A direct and significant relationship
Empowerment		584/0**	0.001	
Supervisor support		518/0**	0.001	
Professional development	Civil-organizational behaviors	061/0	0.327	No direct and significant relationship
Empowerment		610/0**	0.001	
Supervisor support		374/0**	0.001	

The results showed that professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support enjoy a positive and significant relationship with job attitudes (satisfaction and commitment) at 0/001 level. But, only empowerment and supervisor support has a positive and significant relationship with civil-organizational behaviors at 0/ 001 level.

Are professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support able to predict job attitudes (satisfaction and commitment) and civil-organizational behaviors? In this section, the question was examined using simultaneous statistical regression techniques. In the regression model of the dependent variable of job attitudes (satisfaction and commitment) as well as all predictor variables (professional growth, empowerment and supervisor's support) intervened. But in the regression model of the dependent variable of civil-organizational behaviors, only predictor variables empowerment and supervisor's support intervened. And the professional growth variable did not intervene because of having no relationship.

**Table 3**  
**Summary of regression analysis**

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup>-Adjusted</i>
Job attitudes	.567	.322	.314
Civil-organizational behavior	.404	.163	.156

According to the figures of *R<sup>2</sup>* in the above table the predictor variables explain about 32 percent of job attitudes' changes (satisfaction and commitment) and 16 percent of changes in the civil-organizational behaviors all of which are significant.

As it continued, one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA) was used to examine the regression significance, i.e. to test whether predictor variables could be effective in predicting criterion variable or not. The results are presented in the table below.

**Table 4**  
**The ANOVA analysis of predictor factors**

<i>Dependent variable</i>		<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean of squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>
Civil-organizational behaviors	Regression	5.18	2	2.590	10.531	0.001
	Error	53.438	216	.246		
	Total	56.028	218			

	Regression	8.504	3	2.834		
Job attitudes	Error	74.175	215	0.345	8.217	0.001
	Total	82.679	218			

As it could be observed in the table above the obtained F for all three dependent variables in the 0/00 is significant and the predictor variables have a significant and important role in the prediction.

**Table 4**  
**Level of significance**

		<i>B</i>	<i>Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Level of significance</i>
Civil- organizational behavior	The fix figure					
	Individual	0.593	0.175	0.523	3.389	0.001
		0.203	0.13	0.226	1.559	0.122
	Environmental	1.511	0.33		4.578	0
		-0.109	0.09	-0.103	-1.221	0.224
	Managerial	-0.173	0.143	-0.168	-1.211	0.228
		0.187	0.14	0.184	1.331	0.186

According to the obtained coefficients in each regression model, the regression equation for each of the two criterion variables will be as follows:

$$\hat{y} = a \text{ Fix figure} + b_1 x_1$$

(Formula 1 regression equation for criterion variable of job attitudes)  
(Professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support 1/511+0/503= Job attitudes)

(Formula 2 regression equation for criterion variable of civil- organizational behaviors)  
(Empowerment and supervisor's support 1/511+0/503= Civil-organizational behaviors)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ackfelt and Coote (2005) and Golparvar and Rafizadeh (2009) have already stressed the relationship between supervisor's support, empowerment and professional growth with job attitudes too and provided scientific evidence for this relationship. Therefore, the findings of this research are aligned with the findings



of Ackfelt and Coote (2005) and Golparvar and Rafizadeh (2009). In theory, the relationship between professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support with job attitudes functions as a form of social exchange and spillover of a sense of personal value to the field of satisfaction and commitment as the discussed job attitudes.

Based on the principles discussed in the field of social exchange, when the organization and its leaders provide the needed field for empowerment, professional development and support for employees, quite logically, they trigger a tendency to retaliate among the employees. This is the same to enhancement of satisfaction and commitment among them. But at a glance beyond, reciprocity does not end in terms of commitment and satisfaction. Since, in terms of content, the principle of reciprocity leaves its impact through peculiar behaviors. Accordingly, employees turn to positive behaviors such as civil-organizational behaviors including helping, fairness and citizenship virtues mostly after an increase in satisfaction and commitment so that they could put their faith in an organization that has supported them, empowered them and provided the ground for their professional growth.

The key job attitudes in the field of industrial and organizational researches are job satisfaction and organizational commitment (George and Jones, 1997).

Therefore, it is observed that when employees are enhanced in terms of their attitude through professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support they easily turn to civil-organizational behaviors. So it could be said that investing in the professional development and empowerment of the employees will soon return to the organization as an increase in the level of their civil-organizational behaviors. But based on the other parts of the evidence, there is a positive relationship between empowerment and job attitudes (Netemeyer et al., 1997). Supervisor's support and empowerment had an impact on civil-organizational behaviors as well as on job attitudes. Ackfelt and Coote (2005) have also reported a significant relationship between professional development, empowerment and supervisor's support with civil-organizational behaviors in the structural models of a sample of trade employees, while Golparvar and Rafizadeh (2009) also found a significant relationship between supervisor's support and empowerment with civil-organizational behaviors. Then, it seems that the findings of this study enjoy a relative alignment with the findings of Ackfelt and Coote (2005) and Golparvar and Rafizadeh (2009). Because in this research too professional development, supervisor's support and empowerment has a significant and positive correlation with job attitudes and for civil-organizational behaviors except professional growth, the other two variables have a significant and positive relationship.

This study's researchers believe that professional development and empowerment have the same orientation. While at the same time the internal communication between supervisor's support, empowerment and professional growth could shift their positions depending on which model is used to assess the goodness of structural models.

However, the impact of supervisor's support and empowerment for civil-organizational behaviors shows that staff in office environments and the headquarters of the Organization of Isfahan Islamic Azad University need to be empowered (a growth in work skills) and their supervisor's support in order to get engaged in civil-organizational behaviors. The reason is people with higher skills could rapidly find strategies to help their colleagues or organization and they could adopt a higher level of tolerance against defects and deficiencies.

Thus, the interested researchers are advised to alter creativity and innovation and negative behaviors (such as deviant behavior) in future studies instead of civil-organizational behaviors in a bid to increase the related knowledge about the role of advocacy, empowerment and professional growth along with job attitudes in terms of behavioral outcomes in the workplace.

Operational recommendation in accordance with the findings could be creating training courses for professional development, empowerment and the establishment of support systems for staff in administrative environments. The training courses could provide for the required infrastructure necessary to increase the level of civil-organizational behaviors in the workplace.

### *References*

- Ackfeldt, A.L., & Coote, L.V. (2005), A study of organizational citizenship behaviors in retail setting. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(?), 151-159.
- Blakely, G.L., Andrens, M.C., & Moorman, R.H., 2005, The moderating effects of equity sensitivity on the relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 20(2).
- Bowen, S.P., & Lawler, III.E., 1992, The empowerment of service workers: what, why, how, and when. *Sloan Management Review*, 33.
- Bukhari, Z.U., & Ali, U. (2009), Relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior in the geographical context of Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 4(1), 85-92.
- Dalal, R.S. (2005), A meta-analysis of the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(6), 1241-1255

- George, J.M., & Jones, G.R., 1997, Organization spontaneity in context. *Human Performance*, 10.
- Golparvar, Mohsen, and Bilali, Somayeh. (2010), the model of promoting civil-organizational behaviors through psychological contract, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Second Biennial Congress on Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Isfahan, Iran, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, March 3-4, 2010.
- Golparvar, Mohsen, and Rafizadeh, Pourandokht (2009), the model to promote organizational citizenship behaviors through job attitudes, professional development, leadership support and empowerment, *Journal* 27 -46, (44) Basirat, 16.
- Golparvar, M., and Rafizadeh, Pourandokht (2009), the model to promote ethical conduct and consequential organizational behavior 7-30, (2) among teachers. *Journal of Education*, 26.
- Golparvar, M., Vakili, Nafiseh., and Atashpour, H. (2009), The relationship between the components of transformational leadership and job performance, civil-organizational behaviors and emotional commitment. The first national conference on new findings in psychology, Ahvaz, Ahvaz Islamic Azad University, March, 2009.
- Hartline, M.D., Maxham, III. J.G., & McKee, D.O., 2000, Corridors of influence in the dissemination of customer – oriented strategy to customer contract service employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 64(2).
- Mathieu, J.E., & Zajac, C.M. (1990), A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108 (2), 171-194.
- Netemeyer, R.G., Boles, J.S., McKee, D.O., & McMurrian, R., 1997, An investigation into the antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviors in a personal selling context. *Journal of Marketing*, 61(3).
- Podsakoff, P.M., Mackenzie, S.B., Paine, J.B., & Bachrach, D.G., 2000, Organizational citizenship behaviors: a critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*.
- Roberson, Q.M.,M., 2006, Justice in teams: The activation and role of sense making in the emergence of justice climates. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 100.
- Sarmad, Zohreh, Bazargan, Abbas, and Hejazi, Elahe (1997), *Research methods in the behavioral sciences*. First Edition, Tehran: Agah Publishing.
- Schumacher, Randall, A., and Lumax, Richard, J. (2009), *An introduction to structural equation modeling*. Translated by Wahid Qasemi, First Edition, Tehran: Sociologists Publications. The year the work was published in the original language, 2004.

Spreitzer, G.M., Kizilos, M.A., & Nason, S.W., 1997, A dimensional analysis of the relationship between psychological empowerment and effectiveness, satisfaction and strain. *Journal of Management*, 23(5).

Walumbwa, F.O., Wu, C., & Orwa, G., 2008, Contingent reward transactional leadership, work attitudes, and organizational citizenship behavior: The role of procedural justice climate perceptions and strength. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19.