



The Relationship between Occupational Skills and Organizational Learning with Principals' Occupational Quality of Life in Birjand Primary Schools of Iran

Hossein Jena Abadi¹, Mohammad Reza Ghaderi Gask²

¹PhD in Psychology, Associate of University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran

²Graduate Student Educational Research University of Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran

*Corresponding author's Email: hjenaabai@ped.usb.ac.ir

ABSTRACT: The present study aims to investigate the relationship between occupational skills and organizational learning with principals' occupational quality of life in Birjand primary schools. A correlational-descriptive method was used and statistical population included all primary school principals in Birjand during educational year 92-93 making a population of 92 participants. Standard Neefe questionnaire including five dimensions (Employee Skills and Capabilities, Mental Models, Shared Mission and Vision, Team Work and Team Learning, and Systems Thinking), Whoqol-bref questionnaire of occupational quality of life including 26 questions, and occupational skills questionnaire from principals' occupational skills questionnaire (Farhang, 1997). Including 30 questions were used in the research. Questionnaire validity was content type and the reliability of each questionnaire was estimated 0.91, 0.95, 0.87 respectively, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Redundancy, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used in order to describe data, while Pearson Correlation Coefficient, independent-t test, and one-way variance analysis (f-test) were used to analyze data. Results from Pearson correlation Coefficient show that there is a significant and direct relation between dimensions of occupational skills (technical, conceptual and human) and occupational quality of life. Moreover, there is a direct and significant relation between occupational quality of life and employee skills and capabilities, shared mission and vision, and systems thinking. There is also a significant and direct relation between principals' technical skills with mental models and systems thinking, employee skills and capabilities with human skills, and conceptual skills with mental models and systems thinking. According to the results, there is no significant relation between technical skills with employee skills and capabilities, shared mission and vision, and team work. There is no significant relation between conceptual skills with organizational models, shared mission and vision, and team work either. Moreover, there is no significant relation between human skills with mental models, shared mission and vision, team work and team learning, and systems thinking. The results show that (according to t test) the rate of occupational skills and occupational quality of life is equal among male and female principals. In addition, the results of f test shows similar occupational skills and quality of life with respect to education.

Key words: Occupational Skills, Organizational Learning, Occupational Quality of Life.

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century is named management era, because the speed, power of action, and mass of human and industrial products require the presence of thoughtful and wise coordinators called managers. Organizational survival and the effectiveness and performance of educational system depend on management quality. Organizational management needs paying attention to different mixtures such as facilities, organizational features, and human resources. Proper use of human resources in an organization along with financial resources requires knowledge and awareness of associated methods and it can be said that one of major dimensions of success or failure in social organizations is related to the way they deal with human. Management and leadership can be considered

as fundamental aspects of organizations and communities (Mirkamali, 2000).

Today, regarding tremendous and unique changes in economy, politics, science, and technology, especially during the recent decade, management responsibilities and functions have become broader, more complicated, and difficult compared to the past. As a result, only those people who have received occupational training and education can perform management responsibilities effectively and efficiently. In this respect, management is considered as a technical work or profession which has been established according to a set of different knowledge (Pardakhtchi, 1996). Educational managers should have significant conceptual skills in order to know educational environment, understand mutual relationship between different factors, recognize educational priorities, make



effective decisions, and provide the best results with proper performance.

All these issues have led to more emphasis on organizational learning in big organizations and researchers are trying to promote this important element in organizations' administrative structure. In other words, they investigate and search for ways in order to establish learning organizations.

Stating the problem

Management plays a critical and basic role in today world so that Alfred Marshal, British economist, says: "If all assets and tools of production are destroyed across the world but science and art of management remain production, development, and progress will still continue" (Bayan, 1992).

Increasing social complexity, science progress, technology, consequent needs, and expansion of organizations requires skilled and efficient managers to control organizations effectively because managers' reasonable performance will lead to organizational growth and survival. Efficiency and effectiveness is met through management skills, and failure in each skill will decrease the chance of manager and eventually organization's success. Therefore, each skill is important in order to perform management responsibilities effectively (Anderson, 1998). In other words, managers' competence and qualification regarding management skills can be considered as important factors in organizational sustainable success. Managers need basic skills in order to have an effective performance. In fact, management is meaningless without human resources and the main aspect of dealing with human resources is relationship with them (Mirkamali, 1995). Overall, occupational quality of life as a philosophy means the quality and content of relations between humans, professions, and different occupational responsibilities. These relations can be considered from different aspects such as human, organization, community, job design, work structure, personal needs and values, and social concepts (Shirzad and Bordbar, 2011). There is a direct and significant relation between occupational quality of life and human resources productivity, which means that whatever we invest regarding occupational quality of life, we will increase organizational productivity (Ghasemi, 2001).

These skills and capabilities make managers more effective in their occupation and out of work environment; therefore they are needed in order to achieve organizational productivity. Moreover, managers' command on these abilities leads to more

satisfaction and ensures them about the need to progress and growth (Marseille, 1998).

Organizational learning was first provided by Mars and Simon (1958) in other words, research on organizational learning has been started since 30 years ago and has faced an increasing growth up to now.

Therefore, based on what mentioned above, the main question is that "is there a relationship between occupational skills (technical, human and conceptual) and organizational learning with principals' occupational quality of life in Birjand primary schools?"

Importance and necessity

Every country's educational system includes a set of requirements for formal organizations. Performance of educational system which is controlled by educational managers is not only important for economic and social growth but also for the effects it has on job mobilization and expectations. The most important point is that management in a place like educational organization, especially at schools needs a mixture of triple skills more than any other situation. Thus, these skills are critical and necessary for principals (Safi, 1993). It seems that skill (Katz, 1991). Represents capabilities that are extendable and show themselves in practice rarely being represented potentially. Moreover, education is the best tool to change values and behaviors and helps people to prepare for providing social and economic services and enter professions based on their talent and desire. As a result, from the first of this century all countries that have developed educational institutes using educated and experienced managers have passed development and progress steps successfully.

This research aims to investigate occupational skills and organizational learning and their relationship with principals' occupational quality of life in order to provide guidelines for better school management.

Background

1. Amelie (2002) carried a research entitled "investigating the relationship between employees' occupational quality of life with their performance in Islamic Azad University of Rudehen". His results showed a significant correlation between employees' occupational quality of life and their performance.

2. Khadivi and Olyee (2008) in a research entitled "the status of employees' occupational quality of life in Tabriz Islamic Azad University" showed that there is a significant relation between employees' occupational quality of life and age, experience, and gender.

3. According to the results of Etebarian and Khalili research (2009) entitled "the relationship between occupational quality of life and its dimensions with organizational sociability" there is a direct and significant relation between occupational quality of life and all its dimensions including fair and sufficient pay, safe environment, growth opportunity, law and legalism, general atmosphere of occupational life, and social consistency with organizational sociability.

4. Jena Abadi and Nastizai (2011) in a research entitled "employees' quality of life in Baharan psychological research, treatment and educational center in Zahedan" concluded that there is no significant relation between personnel's quality of life based on gender, marital status, executive responsibility, educational level, work years, and employment status except executive responsibility.

5. Shipper (1994) has performed research management meetings regarding men and women management skills. According to a recent study, men and women own a similar set of management skills which affects their performance and success in a similar way using proportional and specific skills. A research group investigated if management skills are gender specific or not. The research was performed on management skills of 177 women and 115 men. The results confirmed previous and new theories and finally the research group stated that gender is a neutral variable regarding management skills.

Research objectives

The overall objective of the present study is to investigate the relationship between occupational skills (technical, human, conceptual) and organizational learning with principals' occupational quality of life.

Secondary objectives

Investigating the relationship between occupational skills (technical, human, conceptual) with dimensions of principals' organizational learning, Investigating the relationship between dimensions of occupational skills (technical, human, conceptual) with principals' occupational quality of life, Investigating the relationship between occupational skills and occupational quality of life with gender, Investigating the relationship between occupational skills and occupational quality of life with education level

Research questions

Is there a relationship between occupational skills, organizational learning, and principals' quality of life?

Is there a significant relation between principals' occupational quality of life and dimensions of organizational learning?

Is there a significant relation between occupational skills and principals' occupational quality of life?

Is there a significant relation between dimensions of occupational skills and dimensions of principals' organizational learning?

Is there a significant relation between occupational skills and principals' occupational quality of life with gender?

Is there a significant relation between occupational skills and principals' occupational quality of life with education?

Methodology

Given the research title and objective which investigates the relationship between occupational skills and organizational learning with principals' occupational quality of life in Birjand, descriptive correlational method was used.

Statistical population

Statistical population included all male and female principals of Birjand primary schools.

Sampling method and sample size

In the present research, census was used and all the statistical population was chosen to fill out the questionnaire.

According to Morgan table, for sample size of 92 participants, the number of 75 people is mentioned and due to similarity in numbers all the population was investigated.

Methods and tools for data collection

Data collection was performed using questionnaires. In order to collect data, occupational quality of life questionnaire (technical, human, conceptual) including 30 questions, organizational learning questionnaire including 24 questions, and occupational quality of life questionnaire including 26 questions were used.

Neefe standard questionnaire including five dimensions was used. This questionnaire includes 24 questions with Likert seven-alternative scale (completely disagree to completely agree). Scoring is as follows: completely disagree gets score 1; disagree score 2; somehow disagree score 3; no idea score 4; somehow agree score 5; agree score 6; completely agree score 7.

WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire was used in order to measure occupational quality of life. This questionnaire includes 26 questions with Likert five-alternative scale (very little to very much). Scoring is as follows: very much gets score 5; much score4; so-so score3; little score2; and very little score1.

Principals' occupational skills questionnaire (Farhang, 1997) was used to measure occupational skills. This questionnaire includes 30 questions with Likert five-alternative scale (from very little to very much). Scoring is as follows: very much gets score 5; much score 4; somehow score 3; little score 2; and very little score 1. Questions 1-13 measure conceptual dimension, 14-20 are related to human, and 21-30 technical skills.

Validity and reliability of data collection tools

Validity is conceptual in this research. In conceptual validity, some experts say if the questions consider all the aspects completely or not. In order to ensure validity, the questionnaires were given to six experts in educational and training sciences.

The results for questionnaire validity with Cronbach's alpha were 0.87 for occupational skills, 0.91 for organizational learning, and 0.95 for occupational quality of life.

Statistical techniques

Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential methods. At descriptive level, statistical indicators such as mean and SD were used in order to describe data. At inferential level, statistical tests such as Pearson correlation coefficient, independent t, and one-way variance analysis were used in order to answer research hypotheses. In should be noted that all statistical calculations were performed using SPSS software version 20.

In this section, research questions are considered using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

First question: is there a relationship between occupational skills and organizational learning with principals' occupational quality of life in Birjand primary principals?

To deal with this question, descriptive data, mean, SD, and Pearson correlation coefficient were used. Teble 1 shows the results of descriptive and referential statistics.

Second question: Is there a significant relation between dimensions of occupational skills and principals occupational quality of life in Birjand primary school?

Table 1. The results of descriptive data on occupational skills, organizational learning, and occupational quality of life

Variables	Mean	SD
Occupational Skills	125.51	16.34
Organizational Learning	44.54	11.23
Occupational Quality of Life	63.12	13.18

Table 2. The results of correlation coefficient for occupational skills and occupational quality of life

Variables	Occupational Quality of Life	
	r	Sig.
Occupational Skills	Technical	0.61
		**0.000
	Human	0.52
		**0.008
		0.43
		**0.005

As it is shown in table 2, there is a significant and direct relation between dimensions of occupational skills (technical, conceptual, and human) with principals' occupational quality of life in Birjand at the level of 0.99 (in all dimensions p<0.01).

Third question: Is there a significant relation between occupational quality of life and principals' organizational learning in Birjand primary schools?

However, regarding p>0.05, there is no significant relation between mental models and team learning at 0.95 level.

Table 3. The results of correlation coefficient for organizational learning and occupational quality of life

Variables	Occupational Quality of Life	
	r	Sig.
Dimensions of Organizational Learning	Employee skills	0.49
		**0.000
	Mental skills	0.19
		0.31
	Shared Mission and Vision	0.33
		**0.002
	Team Work	0.11
		0.10
	Systems Thinking	0.38
		**0.005

According to table 3, there is a significant and direct relation between dimensions of employee skills, shared mission and vision, and systems thinking with principals occupational quality of life at 0.99 level (in all dimensions p>0.05).

Fourth question: Is there a significant relationship between occupational skills and dimensions of organizational learning in Birjand primary principals?

Table 4. The results of correlation coefficient for occupational skills and organizational learning

Variables	Occupational Skills			
	Technical	Human	Conceptual	
Employee skills	r	0.29	0.52	0.29
	sig	0.12	**0.006	0.13
Mental Models	r	0.48	0.30	0.37
	sig	**0.001	0.10	**0.003
Shared vision	r	0.25	0.38	0.36
	sig	0.10	0.13	0.11
Team Learning	r	0.10	0.24	0.49
	sig	0.09	0.13	0.18
Systems Thinking	r	0.46	0.11	0.56
	sig	**0.004	0.10	**0.009

According to table 4, there is a significant and direct relation between principals' technical skills with mental models and systems thinking, between human skills with employee skills, and between conceptual skills with dimensions of mental models and systems thinking at 0.99 level ($p < 0.01$). There is no significant relation between other dimensions of occupational skills and organizational learning ($p > 0.05$).

Fifth question: are occupational skills and occupational quality of life similar in male and female principals?

Table 5. The results of correlational coefficient for occupational skills and organizational learning based on gender

Variables	Gender	Number	Mean	SD	t	df	sig
Occupational Quality of Life	Male	51	53.45	7.7	0.23	90	0.56
	Female	41	51.50	10.8	-	-	-
Occupational Skills	Male	51	55.33	8.5	0.34	90	0.61
	Female	41	52.75	5.5	-	-	-

According to the results, occupational quality of life shows a mean of 53.45 and SD of 7.7 in male principals, while the same figures are respectively 51.50 and 10.8 for female principals. Calculated t being -0.23 with freedom degree of 90 at level of 95% is not significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, the occupational quality of life is similar in male and female principals and our hypothesis is rejected.

Moreover, occupational skills represent a mean of 55.33 and SD of 8.5 in male principals and 52.75 and 5.5 in female principals respectively. Calculated t which is -0.34 with freedom degree of 90 at level of 95% is not significant ($p > 0.05$). as a result, occupational skills are the same in male and female principals.

Sixth question: Is there a significant difference between occupational skills and occupational quality of life according to principals' education?

Table 6. The results of correlational coefficient for occupational skills and organizational learning based on education

Variables	Education	Number	Mean	f	sig
Occupational quality of life	Associate degree	4	125	0.833	0.45
	BA	63	130		
	MA and higher	25	120/25		
Occupational skills	Associate degree	4	60/6	0.625	0.37
	BA	63	33		
	MA and higher	25	59.33		

According to table6, calculated f is respectively 0.83 and 0.62 for between-group freedom degree 2 and intergroup freedom 89, which is not significant at 0.95 level ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, occupational skills and occupational quality of life are similar based on education.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that there is a significant and direct relation between dimensions of occupational skills (technical, conceptual, and human) with occupational quality of life. Moreover, there is a significant and direct relation between occupational quality of life with dimensions of employee skills, shared vision and systems thinking. There is a significant and direct relation between principals technical skills with mental models and systems thinking, between human skills and employee skills, and between conceptual skills with mental models and systems thinking which is of course inconsistent with the results of Nadi and Sajadian (2011). on investigating primary styles and occupational quality of life showed that shared projects are more effective on improving occupational quality of life. It can be concluded that there is a significant relation between occupational quality of life and human skills which leads to employees and principal cooperation at work.

According to the results, occupational skills are similar among male and female principals. This finding is consistent performed research management sessions on male and female management skills. He stated that

men and women possess a similar set of occupational skills with the same effects on their performance and success which is associated with the use of proper and specific skills.

Another result of this research emphasized that male and female occupational quality of life is similar which is consistent with Jena Abadi and Nasti Zai concluded that there is no significant relation between employees' quality of life and their gender. However, this result is not consistent with Khadivi and olyee (2006). They concluded that there is a significant difference between employees' occupational quality of life with age, experience, and gender.

Another result shows that occupational skills are the same regarding education which is consistent He concluded that there is no significant relation between education, diploma mean, and the number of children with human skills.

According to the results, principals' occupational quality of life is the same regarding education and this finding is consistent with Jena Abadi and Nasti Zai (2011). They showed that there is no significant relation between employees' quality of life and their education.

Suggestions

1. If principals have moral and respectful relations with employees, follow commitments to rules and legislations, be honest in their speech, behave with dignity, respect others and have humility to other employees, they will be able to increase their trust in themselves and organization. In such an atmosphere managers will be able to manage effectively and prepare the backgrounds for compliance with guidelines. It seems that managers can control and manage all conflicts this way.

2. Managers shouldn't just emphasize oh human relations in educational organizations. Personal skills which have a significant relation with technical and conceptual skills should not be ignored at all.

3. Managers need to become familiar with new technics and philosophy of management and pay more attention to clarifying their relations with subordinates. They should also seek a reasonable and realistic explanation of management and leadership strategies and manners in order to identify their expectations from subordinates and recognize their expectations as well. I this way, they will be successful in dealing with some misunderstandings due to inconsistent perceptions and decrease the gap between themselves and their subordinates. As a result employees will be encouraged to follow guidelines and policies while

managers will control and manage the organization toward development and growth.

Suggestions for future research

1. It is recommended that similar research is done at a broader scale and on other educational levels to be able to extend the results.

2. Investigating the variables from theoretical point of view will be helpful.

3. Doing a field research including interviews with principals is recommended.

4. It is suggested to do the same research with a similar title on a different statistical population.

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