

The Analysis of Administrators and Staffs Attitude from the Obstacles of Delegation of Authority

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Abstract

This study was conducted to analyze the managers' and employees' attitude towards obstacles to devolution in Mazandaran Province Gas Company (Iran). According to the exploratory studies, devolution obstacles was explored and identified at two dimensions including managers' unwillingness to devolution and subordinates' reluctance to accept authority. To analyze the data and to confirm or reject the research questions, first, the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov test* was used to determine the normality of data. Given the non-normality of data, non-parametric tests such as one-sample one-tailed Wilcoxon test, Friedman test for ranking components, and Mann-Whitney test were used to identify the employees' and managers' different perception of obstacles to delegation of authority. Findings of the study indicated that Wilcoxon test was not significant at 0.05; that is, lack of trust and confidence in subordinates, inability of managers in guiding subordinates, lack of controlling processes, managers' sense of insecurity, and unwillingness of managers to delegate authority were not the main obstacles to devolution by managers in Mazandran Province Gas Company, and their effects were not significant. In line with examining the obstacles effective to the devolution by subordinates, it was found that the fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal along with the lack of adequate motivation in subordinates were recognized as the most important obstacles to adoption of authority by subordinates in Mazandran Province Gas Company.

Keywords: authority, delegation of authority, obstacles to delegation of authority, managers' unwillingness to delegation of authority, subordinates' reluctance to authority adoption

1. Introduction

One of the main challenges facing today's organizations is non-assignment of authority by superiors and, in some cases, rejection and resistance of the subordinates to accept the authority and responsibility. Naturally, this can create some problems for running the organizations and the clients. Running today's large and complex organizations seems impossible given the diversity of activities and problems they are confronting, without delegating a part of management authorities to the lower level managers (operational level) as well as decentralization in carrying out activities. Under such circumstances, top managers have to delegate some parts of their management powers to the managers under their supervision so that they can get enough opportunity to perform basic tasks, and take steps towards decentralization of organizations' different affairs.

Robbins (1997) points out that, nowadays, decision-making is transferred to the lower levels, and the employees are given more freedom of action so that they can solve their work-related problems and make necessary decisions regarding the planned schedules and operational modes. Organizations are faced with a situation that requires them to delegate some powers to the employees. They have put their employees at the head of affairs. In doing so, managers must learn how to transfer control to others, and on the other hand, learn how to accept responsibility, and know how to make the required decisions.

Pardeshi (2007) classifies authorities into three categories as follows:

- A) Authority based on the knowledge: In this type of delegation, experts and specialists' knowledge is used; so that, they teach, guide, and advice their subordinates.
- B) Authority based on individual's status: Each person, whether in top or low level of organization, holds a special status. Thus a person's authority area depends on his status.
- C) Authority based on the Law: When the foundation of authority is formed based on the law theories, this kind of authority is called legal authority.

The effective delegation of authority can help to improve capabilities and knowledge of subordinates, so that their effectiveness is increased. Authority delegation can be done to show confidence and trust in the person who undertakes task and work. MISHRA (1992) and Gambetta (1988) found that the individuals who feel that they are trusted by their managers are more effective than those who do not gave such a feeling. Devolution can be understood as a process to enhance those people's commitment who accept the task and responsibility.

In today's rapidly-changing and complex world, gas is the main source of energy with a certain value, and numerous competitions are taking place to overpower this clean energy. It is a valuable source for which vast sums of money is spent every day on conducting research for its optimization, and similarly, on increasing social welfare. Therefore, providing citizens with a clean and safe energy (gas), providing the society with appropriate services, and attempting to increase the relative welfare level are considered as the most important concerns and issues for managers and employees of this industry. The company under study contains 450 formal employees and over 1300 informal employees indicating the great size of this company. On the other hand, delivering gas to cities (58 cities) and villages (2921 villages) within this province is viewed as the inherent missions of this company. Given this importance, the issue of devolution is considered as an extremely vital issue in the management arena of this company, and naturally, without paying attention to delegating authority to lower levels of organization, the flow and continuation of gas delivered to citizens will face some defects practically, and this calls for senior managers to take delegation of authority into their consideration to carry out the fast and optimal gas delivery activities as well as to respond to the company's subscribers on time. On the other hand, they need to pay attention to the employees' and operational level managers' willingness to accept authority and responsibility as a vital and important issue.

2. Statement of the Problem

An organization may have sufficient financial resources and optimal human forces, regulate necessary plans, and produce an appropriate organizational structure and framework. However, if authority is not delegated in such an organization and authorities are not used, nothing is done practically. For an organization to initiate its activity such as an organism, it is essential that senior officials in an organization start delegating authority. In other words, the bosses should necessarily apply the right to give orders so that the employees perform the tasks assigned to them.

One of the points to be taken into consideration in devolution (devolution) is the maturity of employees. In other words, employees must possess an appropriate maturity level to understand and accept authority. Hersey & Blanchard (1972) consider the employees' maturity in such factors as experience, education, and accountability. According to Hersey and Blanchard perspective, it can be said that individuals should posses such features as an education level suited to the type of authority, prerequisite experience, and sense of accountability and responsibility. One of the important concepts which is very close to devolution is the issue of centralization and decentralization in an organization. One way of decentralization within an organization is devolution which is called administrative decentralization.

In this regard, Waldo (1999) states that what should be decentralized, first, needs to be centralized, and discussion about decentralization will be fruitless if the conditions for order and control are not provided, since a chaotic and disorganized situation cannot be controlled in a decentralized way.

Wilson (1887, pp. 197-222) believes that if the power or authority is divided among individuals within an organization and many people make a contribution to it, then the power or authority will become vague and uncertain and is converted into irresponsibility. However, the authority or responsibility will be easily visible if it is centralized among the office heads or the heads of office subsidiaries. Therefore, if responsibility is centralized at the top of organization (its heads), it can be prevented from being befoiled in organizations.

Bessertn & Beauvais (2002, pp. 13-14) maintain that, as a strategy to increase the organizational efficiency, devolution is a globally accepted issue, but no definite and agreed solution has been presented regarding how devolution can be done and what affairs should be assigned to the subordinates so that leading to the acceptance on part of subordinates, lack of resistance by managers, and increasing efficiency.

Since managers' and employees' attitudes towards devolution process are effective in its application, use, and acceptance, the present study aimed at identifying and analyzing managers' and employees' attitudes towards the obstacles to devolution in Mazandaran Province Gas Company.

3. Theoretical Foundations and Review of Literature

Kyprianou (2010) states that devolution is one of the most significant skills required for managers which is the assignment of needed authorities to subordinates to do their duties and developing a sense of responsibility in them for performing their duties.

Chester Barnard who views authority as subject to the acceptance by subordinates assumes that the essence of authority is the tacit acceptance of orders and employees' willingness to abide by them. Thus, the authority of the person giving order in issuing order is evident when the subordinate accepts the orders which have been issued. Barnard is of the belief that the authority cannot be imposed on the employees, but employees can choose to accept or reject the authority. The only way to change people is that they themselves make a choice, and managers as well as supervisors cannot force people to change their belief, and if a change is made by force, that change will not be real and long-lasting. Barnard stressed that managers should understand the concept of "personal autonomy". He was looking for the development of a "zone of indifference" within the subordinates which helped the better understanding of power relations among individuals who were directly communicating with each other. Hartley (2006, p. 286) suggests that people have a choice to accept or reject a superior's orders. He also asserts that:

- 1) If the nature of order is in contrast with individual's beliefs, then the order will not be put into action.
- 2) If the nature of order is consistent with individual's beliefs, then the order will be put into action (zone of indifference).

Some reasons as why managers are seemingly reluctant to delegate authority to their subordinates are as follows:

- a) Managers may think that they themselves are more capable than subordinates in doing tasks;
- b) The lack of confidence and trust in subordinates: Since the managers are ultimately responsible for subordinates' outcomes, they may prefer to take undertake the authority themselves.
- c) The managers' incapability to guide subordinates: Managers may not be able to express their thoughts and ideas in an organized way. In addition, they may not possess sufficient and necessary capability to describe and explain the systematic activities to subordinates.
- d) The managers' sense of insecurity: Some managers feel insecurity when delegation authority, especially when their subordinates show more ability and capacity in accomplishing affairs and solving problems.
- e) Lack of control: If the manager makes certain that the controlling system is not sufficient for examining and investigating the results of devolution, he refuses to transfer authority to the subordinates.

Some reasons for subordinate's reluctance to accept authority are as follows:

- A) Some employees avoid accepting authority because they fear that they may be rebuked, criticized, or sacked due to the wrong and unreasonable decisions.
- B) When there is not enough motivation to undertake heavier responsibility that involves accepting more pressure and work, subordinates will have no inclination to accept authority. This means that, in the absence of adequate rewards in the form of appropriate salaries and benefits or promotion opportunities, the employee will refuse to accept additional authority.
- C) The employee may not trust his/her ability to do his/her duties; therefore, he refuses to accept authority to conceal his inability.

It is believed that devolution refers to the administrative decentralization and is a way of decentralization. It is an extremely important process because decision-making is transferred from the organization's top levels to the low levels.

In a study, Feffer (1990) found that one of the best tools used by managers in better productivity of their job is the principle of devolution in management, and since devolution may not be utilized effectively, while delegating authority managers should be aware that why, to whom, and to what extent they can delegate authority.

In a study titled "democracy at work", Ritsky (1994) concluded that, unlike the previous authoritarian methods of management, democracy at work and devolution increase productivity to a large extent.

Some studies show that the requirements for fulfilling devolution by managers are managers' understanding and

awareness of leadership skills (Saccardi & Banai, 1994, p. 237), managers’ possession of management and leadership qualifications (Powell, 2011, p. 9), active learning of managerial strategies (Powell, 2011, p. 10), and acquiring management skills (Thompson, 2012, p. 21).

Some studies view the managers’ attitude to devolution as a barrier to its fulfillment (Corazzini et al., 2010). Peoples’ attitude towards affairs determines their intention in dealing with problems, and, in directing peoples’ behavior towards their goals, awareness of consequences and effective processing of complicated information about the living environment are effective.

Hatami (2012) in a study entitled “ The impact of devolution on efficiency of human resources at Islamic Azad University of district one" suggests that there is a significant direct relationship between devolution and certain productivity components including the capability, organization support, organization decision, and validity of rules. Accordingly, it was found that the increase or decrease of devolution will increase or reduce the manpower productivity

Delegation is one of the factors leading to employees’ job satisfaction (Han, 2011), increased organizational efficiency (Zie & Bakalis, 2007, p. 286); enhanced capability, knowledge, and commitment; creating self-confidence, respect, and trust in employees; and establishing control over the activities and decisions.

The subject of devolution in administrative system has also been investigated from a legal perspective. According to this perspective, no employee is entitled to delegate his legal authorities to another person. However, where appropriate and in the case of multiplicity of work, in order to save time and energy, administrative regulations and conventions allow some officials such as ministers, deputy ministers, directors-general, and heads of departments to be able to assign the implementation of their non-essential authorities to the subordinate officials so that the receiver of authority is considered the existing supplement of authority assigner. This is so-called delegation of authority. In devolution, the consent of the assigner is the necessary condition and without his consent no delegation takes place. For delegating authority, the cases of delegation and peoples in favor of whom devolution can be adopted should be specified and predicted in the constitution.

According to the general rule, ministers have the right to delegate some parts of their non-essential authorities to deputies and/or directors general of ministries. In devolution, the officials should be given authority in return for the responsibility they were asked for, and those people should also hold accountable against authority assigner; in other words, it should be clearly shown that what are the delegated duties and authorities, and who is responsible for accomplishing them.

4. Conceptual Model

Through studying and exploring the theoretical principles and literature review, we can present the conceptual model in Figure 1 based on which the research questions are explained.

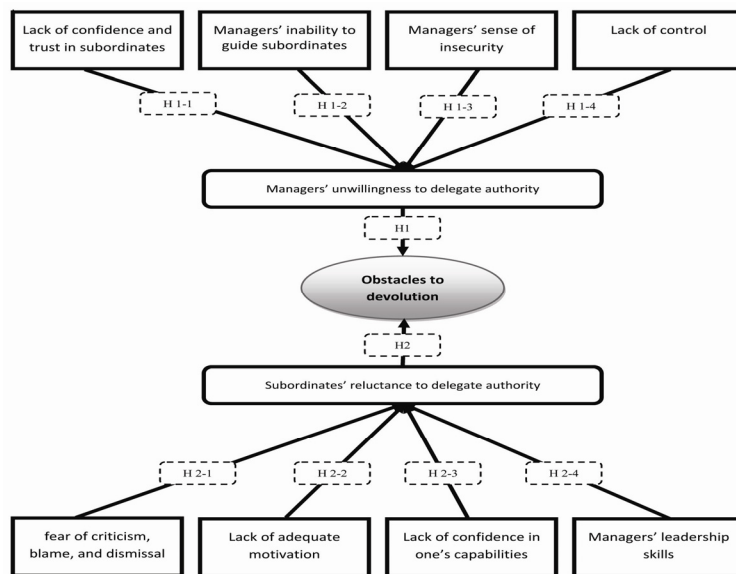


Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

Source: researchers.

5. The Reason for Choosing the Case Study and the Case under Investigation

If the phenomena under investigation (in this case devolution) are not easily distinguishable from their own organizational concept, case study will be a useful method for experimental research (Yin, 1989). Case study is one of the most appropriate ways to answer how and why the phenomena occur; for example the questions such as what are the obstacles to devolution from managers' and employees' perspective? and what significant difference exists between managers' and employees' perception of obstacles to devolution? Furthermore, choosing a special company as the case study facilitates the control of the effective external factors such as the effect of laws and regulations, control and supervision of interest groups, large-scale standards, and common approaches

Choosing Mazandaran Province Gas Company as a case study is due to the progress made in the field of human resource management, especially the area of employee empowerment as well as the participation of this company for several years (2001-2014) in the Organizational Excellence Award which is held by the Iranian center of productivity studies and human resources every year; in addition, this company was able to win management rewards in the recent years. On the other hand, given the large number of formal and informal employees and the quantity of gas delivery operations throughout the province to provide the optimal and on time services to the target community, the company's strategic orientation to increase the social welfare, and the role of gas energy in the sustainable development of this province, choosing this company as a topic for study deemed necessary.

6. Methodology

The present study is an applied research given the nature and purpose it is pursuing and is a descriptive survey research regarding data collection method. The statistical population of this study consisted of 459 managers and employees. Cohen, Krejcie, & Morgan's table was used to determine the size and number of samples, and stratified random sampling method (based on geographical regions) was applied for sampling.

To gather data for laying the foundation for the research general principles including definition of key terms, statement of the problems, statement of implications, and description of significance, library studies such as surveying Persian and Latin articles as well as Persian and Latin books in the area of teaching and similar thesis dissertations in this regard, internet sources, and seminars were used. In order to collect data regarding employees' attitude towards obstacles to devolution, a researcher-made closed- ended questionnaire in the form of a 5-point likert scale was administered. In each item, the respondents should specify their position regarding a subject on a spectrum which indicates their beliefs, ideas, or attitudes towards that item. In this regard, to measure the questionnaire items, likert scale which is one of the most applied scales in the research, especially in behavioral science studies, was utilized.

Table 1. Rating scale for measuring items

Very low	low	medium	high	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

There are different methods for determine the validity of the questionnaire, one of which is content validity. The content validity of a test is generally determined by some experts in the subject matter. At this stage, the necessary modifications were made by polling some people including university lecturers, experts, company managers, and by studying scientific texts and documents. Thus it was shown that the questionnaire was measuring the same intended attribute.

The Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient generally ranges from zero meaning no relationship to +1 meaning complete relationship, and the more the number is closer to 1, the greater the reliability will be. In other words, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient below 0.6 shows a weak reliability, between 0.6 and 0.8 an acceptable reliability, and more than 0.8 a high reliability. By using the data obtained from the questionnaire and SPSS statistical software, reliability coefficient was calculated through Cronbach's alpha .

Table 2. Reliability in terms of divided dimensions and components

Total alpha	Alpha value	Number of question	component	dimension
0/8184	0/7354	1-2-3	Lack of confidence and trust in subordinates	Managers'
	0/6209	4-5	managers' inability in guiding subordinates	unwillingness to
	0/8333	6-7	managers' sense of insecurity	devolution
	0/7387	8-9	lack of control	
0/8268	0/7344	10-11-12-13-14	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal	Subordinates'
	0/8220	15-16-17	Lack of adequate motivation	reluctance to
	0/7089	18-19-20	lack of trust in one's capabilities	accept authority
	0/7721	21-22-23-24-25	Managers' leadership skills	

In analyzing the data, first, the normal distribution of data was studied using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the nature of data did not abide by the normal distribution, non-parametric method was used to examine questions. Wilcoxon test was employed to explore any devolution obstacle in Mazandaran Gas Company, and Friedman test was used for ranking the obstacles. Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized to compare different educational groups, service experiences, and service place. Moreover, Mann-Whitney test was applied to compare managers' and employees' attitudes to delegation obstacles in Mazandaran Gas Company. To rank and prioritize the obstacles in each group individually, again Friedman test was employed, and finally, the structural model was examined. To analyze the data, Excel, Minitab, SPSS, and Lisrel softwares were utilized.

7. Data Analysis

In Table 3, for dimensions and components of devolution in Mazandaran Gas Company, mean and standard deviation statistical indices were totally calculated.

Table 3. Studying statistical indices of obstacles to devolution in the total sample

SD	Mean	Dimensions and components
0/76	3/23	lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
0/96	3/04	managers' inability in guiding subordinates
0/79	3/18	managers' sense of insecurity
0/84	2/96	lack of control
0/67	3/12	managers' unwillingness to devolution
0/62	3/38	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
0/73	3/42	lack of adequate motivation
0/78	2/82	lack of trust in one's capabilities
0/77	3/07	lack of leadership skills in managers
0/56	3/19	subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

To examine referential data, first normality of data is tested to find the appropriate method for testing hypotheses, the results of which are presented in Table 4. Table 2 indicates that the data did not follow normal distribution; therefore, non-parametric methods are used to examine the questions.

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality of data

Result	Probability value	Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics	Dimensions and components
Data distribution is not normal	0/000	2/199	lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
Data distribution is not normal	0/001	2/013	managers' inability in guiding subordinates
Data distribution is not normal	0/000	2/252	managers' sense of insecurity
Data distribution is not normal	0/015	1/569	lack of control
Data distribution is not normal	0/027	1/467	managers' unwillingness to devolution
Data distribution is not normal	0/000	2/067	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
Data distribution is not normal	0/003	1/808	lack of adequate motivation
Data distribution is not normal	1/002	1/886	lack of trust in one's capabilities
Data distribution is not normal	0/013	1/587	lack of leadership skills in managers
Data distribution is not normal	0/006	1/694	subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

In what follows, we will separate dimensions and components of devolution obstacles according to the Table 5.

Table 5. Inferential evaluation of dimensions and obstacles to devolution

Result	Probability value	Wilcoxon statistics	Sub-questions (component)	Main questions (dimension)
Confirming null hypothesis	0/114	3959/0	Lack of confidence and trust in subordinates	
Confirming null hypothesis	0/948	2907/0	Managers' inability in guiding subordinates	Managers'
Confirming null hypothesis	0/576	3440/0	Managers' sense of insecurity	unwillingness to
Confirming null hypothesis	0/985	2698/0	Lack of control	devolution
Rejecting null hypothesis	0/000	5446/0	Fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal	Subordinates'
Rejecting null hypothesis	0/000	5095/0	Lack of adequate motivation	reluctance to accept
Confirming null hypothesis	0/999	1559/0	Lack of trust in one's capabilities	authority
Confirming null hypothesis	0/722	3292/0	Lack of leadership skills in managers	

Since the data follows non-normal distribution, Friedman test is used to test the presence or absence of preference among the variables by respondents, according to Table 4.

Table 6. Studying Friedman test between components of obstacles to devolution

1. Managers' unwillingness to devolution					
Probability value	Degree of freedom	Friedman test	prioritizing	Rank mean	components
0/001	3	15/633	1	2/75	Lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
			3	2/33	Managers' inability in guiding subordinates
			2	2/67	Managers' sense of insecurity
			4	2/26	Lack of control
2. Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority assigned by managers					
Probability value	Degree of freedom	Friedman test	prioritizing	Rank mean	components
0/000	3	75/697	2	2/91	Fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
			1	3/00	Lack of adequate motivation
			4	1/79	Lack of trust in one's capabilities
			3	2/30	Lack of leadership skills in managers

Despite the fact that from the respondents' perspective in general, components related to the "managers' unwillingness to devolution" is not significant while testing hypothesis, but the results of Table 6 indicate that Friedman test is significant at 0.05 error level. Furthermore there is priority among components, meaning that lack of confidence and trust in subordinates is in the first place, managers' sense of insecurity in the second place, managers; inability in guiding subordinates in the third place, and lack of control in the fourth place. In addition, results of Table 4 reveals that Friedman test is significant at 0.05 error level regarding "subordinates' reluctance to accept authority assigned by managers", and there is priority among subordinates' reluctance components, meaning that lack of adequate motivation is in the first place, followed by fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal in the second place, lack of leadership skills in the third place, and lack of trust in one's capabilities in the last place.

Table 7. Studying the difference between managers' and employees' perception of obstacles to devolution

Result	Probability Value	Approximate z	Mann Whitney Statistics	Dimensions And Components
no difference	0/948	-0/065	1218/500	Lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
no difference	0/712	-0/369	1172/000	Managers' inability in guiding subordinates
no difference	0/790	-0/266	1188/000	Managers' sense of insecurity
no difference	0/940	-0/075	1217/000	Lack of control
no difference	0/537	-0/617	1132/500	Managers' unwillingness to devolution
no difference	0/081	-1/746	958/500	Fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
no difference	0/961	-0/049	1221/000	Lack of adequate motivation
no difference	0/594	-0/533	1146/500	Lack of trust in one's capabilities
no difference	0/070	-1/812	947/500	Lack of leadership skills in managers
no difference	0/103	-1/629	974/500	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

As it can be seen in Table 7, probability values derived from Mann Whitney test are not significant at 0.05 error level for each component and dimension; that is, there is not a significant difference between managers' and employees' perceptions of devolution.

Table 8. Prioritizing components separately for managers and employees

Employees		Managers		Component	Dimension
Priority	Ranking mean	Priority	Ranking mean		
1	2/70	1	2/91	lack of confidence and trust in subordinates	managers' unwillingness to devolution
3	2/35	3	2/28	managers' inability in guiding subordinates	
2	2/68	2	2/61	managers' sense of insecurity	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
4	2/27	4	2/20	lack of control	
9/700		7/500		Friedman test	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
3		3		degree of freedom	
0/021		0/058		probability value	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
1	2/92	2	2/87	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal	
2	2/91	1	3/31	lack of adequate motivation	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
4	1/77	4	1/83	lack of trust in one's capabilities	
3	2/39	3	1/98	lack of leadership skills in managers	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
51/661		30/247		Friedman test	
3		3		degree of freedom	Subordinates' reluctance to accept authority
0/000		0/000		probability value	

According to Table 8, it is seen that there is priority between managers and employees so that the lack of confidence and trust in subordinates was found as the most important factor for two groups in dimension of managers' unwillingness to devolution. Furthermore, it was found that the lack of adequate motivation as well as fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal were two effective factors among managers and employees for subordinates' reluctance to accept authority.

Table 9. Examining the difference in the perceptions of devolution in terms of work place

Result	Probability level	Degree of freedom	Kruskal-Walis statistics	Dimensions and components
No difference	0/358	4	4/372	lack of confidence and trust in managers
There is difference	0/022	4	11/459	managers' inability in guiding subordinates
There is difference	0/025	4	11/122	managers' sense of insecurity
No difference	0/067	4	8/761	lack of control
There is difference	0/014	4	12/472	managers' unwillingness to devolution
No difference	0/295	4	4/924	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
No difference	0/084	4	8/218	lack of adequate motivation
There is difference	0/042	4	9/885	lack of trust in one's capabilities
There is difference	0/041	4	9/951	lack of leadership skills in managers
No difference	0/081	4	8/319	subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

According to Table 9, probability values derived from Kruskal-Walis test is significant at 0.05 error level in some dimensions and components; that is, there is a significant difference between perceptions of employees of different work place of devolution. There is a difference in components of managers' inability in guiding subordinates, managers' sense of insecurity, dimension of managers' unwillingness to devolution, lack of trust in one's capabilities, and lack of leadership skills in managers, and perception levels of employees in human resource area is higher than other areas.

Table 10. Examining the differences in the perception of devolution in terms of different academic levels

Result	Probability level	Degree of freedom	Kruskal-Walis statistics	Dimensions and components
no difference	0/122	3	5/789	lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
no difference	0/360	3	3/215	managers' inability in guiding subordinates
no difference	0/283	3	3/807	managers sense of insecurity
There is difference	0/039	3	8/392	lack of control
There is difference	0/040	3	8/294	managers' unwillingness to devolution
no difference	0/692	3	1/460	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
no difference	0/164	3	5/104	lack of adequate motivation
no difference	0/348	3	3/298	lack of trust in one's capabilities
no difference	0/446	3	2/666	lack of leadership skills in managers
no difference	0/303	3	3/644	subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

With respect to Table 10, the probability values derived from Kruskal-Walis tset is significant at 0.05 error level in some dimensions and components; that is, there is a significant difference between perceptions of employees of different educational areas of devolution. There is a difference in component of lack of control in the dimension of managers' unwillingness to devolution, and employees' perception levels in Bachelor's degree is higher than other groups.

Table 11. Examining the differences in the perception of authority in terms of different work experiences

Result	Probability value	Degree of freedom	Kruskal-Walis statistics	Dimensions and components
no difference	0/888	3	0/637	lack of confidence and trust in subordinates
no difference	0/376	3	3/106	managers' inability in guiding subordinates
no difference	0/876	3	0/689	managers' sense of insecurity
no difference	0/981	3	0/179	lack of control
no difference	0/921	3	0/490	managers' unwillingness to devolution
no difference	0/774	3	1/112	fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal
no difference	0/367	3	3/162	lack of adequate motivation
no difference	0/634	3	1/713	lack of trust in one's capabilities
no difference	0/410	3	2/885	lack of leadership skills in managers
no difference	0/524	3	2/239	subordinates' reluctance to accept authority

As seen in Table 11, the probability values derived from Kruskal-Walis test is not significant at 0.05 error level in any dimension and component; that is, there is no significant difference between employees' perception of devolution with different work experiences.

8. Structural Equation Modeling

LISREL software is used in this section for analyzing the data. After drawing the analytical model based on the data in the LISREL software, model fit indices are calculated, and the results are presented below.

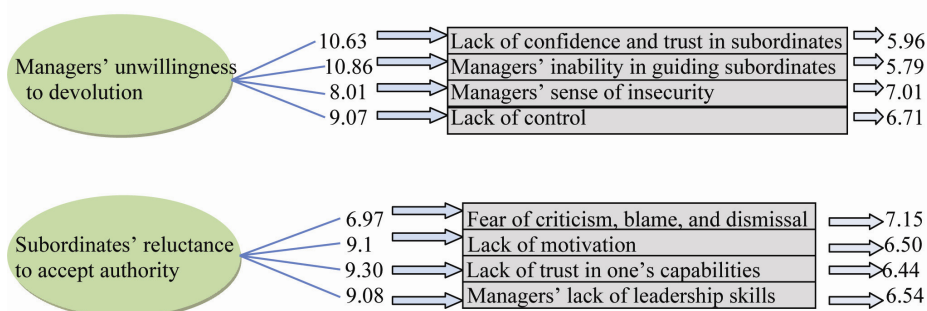


Figure 1. Basic model with t-value

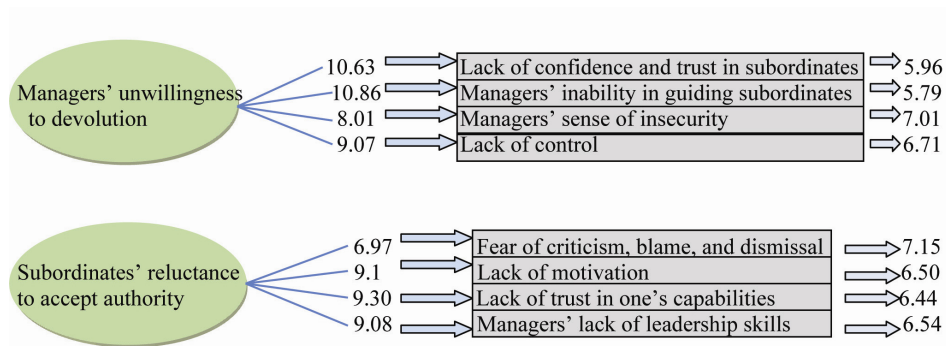


Figure 2. Basic model with standard path coefficients

The above two figures indicate the overall model output for LISREL software. T-values for the model is shown in Figure 1, and the amount of operating load for the model is presented in Figure 2. From the Figure 1, it is seen that all path and modeling coefficients are significant, and Figure 2 displays the strength of relationship for each variable.

Table 12. Studying model fit indices of research

Estimated value	Symptom	Fitting index
19	DF	Degree of freedom
33/90	Chi-Square	Chi-Square
1/78	Chi-Square/DF	Chi-Square divided by degree of freedom
0/082	RMSEA	root mean square error of estimate
0/96	NFI	normalized fit index
0/97	NNFI	Non-normalized fit index
0/98	CFI	Comparative fit index
0/025	RMR	Root mean square residual
0/045	SRMR	Root mean square residual standard
0/93	GFI	Goodness of fit index
0/87	AGFI	Adjusted goodness of fit index

As seen in Table 12, the adjusted indices or goodness of fit indices are all at an acceptable level. The proposed model, therefore, can be an appropriate one.

9. Findings

In line with studying the effective obstacles to devolution, it was found that managers' confidence and trust to subordinates is a moderate level. Managers are capable enough to guide subordinates, and this ability is at a medium level. Managers make the best use of controlling processes, and in general, it can be said that managers at Mazandaran Gas Company are willing to delegate authority. The findings suggested that Wilcoxon test was not significant at 0.05 error level; that is, managers lack of confidence and trust in subordinates, managers' inability in guiding subordinates, lack of controlling processes, managers' sense of insecurity, and generally, managers' unwillingness to delegate authority were not the main obstacles to devolution by managers in Mazandaran Province Gas Company, and their effects are trivial. If attention is not paid to these issues, it is likely that they will be driven towards obstacle, and under such condition, a priority can be exposed on them based on responses. Accordingly, managers' lack of confidence and trust in subordinates is in the first place, managers' sense of insecurity in the second place, managers' inability in guiding subordinates in the third place, and lack of control in the last place.

By investigating the obstacles to devolution, it was observed that fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal, as well as subordinates' lack of adequate motivation was considered as the most important barriers to accept authority by subordinates in Mazandaran Gas Company. However, managers' lack of trust in their capabilities and lack of leadership skills in managers were not the main obstacles to devolution by managers. It can be stated that by enhancing these two factors, the trust in one's capabilities and presence of leadership skills in managers was observed. In general, it was found that subordinates' reluctance to accept authority transferred by company's managers is a main obstacle to accept authority by subordinates in Mazandaran Province Gas Company. Thus, if

sufficient attention is not paid to these issues, it is likely that they will be faced with obstacles, and under such condition, based on the responses, a priority can be imposed on them. Accordingly, the lack of adequate motivation was in the first place, fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal in the second place, lack of leadership skills in managers in the third place, and lack of trust in one's capabilities in the fourth place.

By comparative investigation between different group's perspectives regarding obstacles to devolution, it was found that there was a significant difference between managers' and employees' perceptions of devolution, and managers' as well as employees' prioritizing were considered as the same obstacles. Consequently, the lack of confidence and trust in subordinates was viewed as the most important factor by two groups in dimension of managers' unwillingness to devolution; moreover, the lack of adequate motivation as well as fear of criticism, blame, and dismissal was deemed as two effective factors among managers and employees for subordinates' reluctance to accept authority.

10. Suggestions for Further Research

- a. The managers should obviate any ambiguity in delegation of affairs and strengthen the motivation of subordinates. Thus they can use sufficient incentives such as promotion, better working conditions, financial or spiritual rewards to create motivation.
- b. Developing and implementing a controlling system in the organization so that the manager is constantly kept aware of the process of delegated tasks and provides the needed feedbacks to the delegatee. In this regard, we can refer to the mechanisms such as strategic planning, systematic implementation of employees' performance evaluation, monitoring how costs are implemented through budgeting system, improving and enhancing reporting system, and so on.
- c. Subordinates' encouragement makes them apply their abilities and feel that they are supported by managers. As a result, they will be more willing to take responsibilities.
- d. Improving and strengthening the managers' leadership skills of managers including managers familiarity with the coaching principles, effective communications, devolution of authority techniques, conflict resolution techniques, and so on through holding guidance and training courses.
- e. The necessary agreements should be made between managers and subordinates from the beginning regarding the assigned objectives and tasks; i.e., the activities and tasks need to be discussed and explored. When tasks are allocated, the group members should reach an agreement regarding objectives, resources, reviewing times, and deadlines. The arranged goals should be specific, measurable, accessible, realistic, time-limited, and related to the end result.
- f. The development process should be systematic and be monitored by managers without any intervention or discrediting the work done by individuals. In addition, a review and evaluation are needed to be made through studying the accomplishments as compared with the early objectives.
- g. Devolution should be completely evident and comprehensible, and its ambiguities be resolved through rules, regulations, or briefings.
- h. Developing self-confidence in employees so that they undertake responsibility and take steps towards exaltation. This can be done through paying more attention by managers. The rules and regulations should also be definite so that the employees can be involved in responsibility without fear of punishment.
- i. Managers' lack of confidence in one's subordinates and fearing that they themselves be taken responsible for subordinates' behavior in the eyes' of their superior officials is another factor for obstacles to devolution. In this case, managers should make subordinates prepared for decision-making through education and training.

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