

Commitment in the Relationship Between Structural Empowerment and Social Work Competency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of commitment as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and social work competency among social workers in the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). Structural empowerment encompasses the provision of opportunities, information, support, and resources by organizations to support the professional development of social workers. This research uses a quantitative approach through a survey method, involving 300 randomly selected respondents. The study instrument includes scales that measure structural empowerment, organizational commitment, and social work competency, which includes knowledge, skills, values, and ethics. Multiple regression analysis and mediation tests show a significant direct relationship between structural empowerment and social work competency ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$). Commitment was found to act as a mediator in this relationship, with a significant indirect effect of structural empowerment on competency through commitment ($\beta = 0.105$, $p < 0.01$). The results also indicate that high commitment can reduce burnout and increase social workers' resilience in facing complex challenges. These findings suggest that commitment is a critical element in strengthening the relationship between structural empowerment and social work competency. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to reinforce structural empowerment by providing support, career development opportunities, and a positive work environment. This not only increases social workers' commitment but also helps improve their competency in delivering quality services to the community. This study contributes to the growing literature on the role of commitment in enhancing competency through structural empowerment in social work.

Keywords: Commitment, Structural Empowerment, Social Work Competency, Social Workers, Mediation

1. Introduction

Employee commitment within social organizations plays a crucial role in enhancing work effectiveness and satisfaction. In the context of social work, commitment goes beyond loyalty to the organization; it involves a deep dedication to supporting the community and individuals in need. Structural empowerment, which includes factors such as opportunities, information, support, and resources, serves as a foundation for fostering high levels of commitment among social workers. With adequate structural empowerment, social workers can function more effectively and increase their competency levels, including knowledge, skills, values, and professional ethics.

This study aims to analyse the role of commitment as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and competency among social workers. The primary focus is on assessing how commitment can enhance the effectiveness of structural empowerment in improving social work competency. This article will also discuss the findings based on data analysis and incorporate recent literature.

2. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to collect data from social workers at the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). Quantitative research through a survey method is effective in providing a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting commitment and competency among social workers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A survey method is suitable for understanding the relationship between variables and explaining the role of commitment as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and competency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The study instrument consists of three main sections:

2.1. Structural Empowerment

This instrument measures the level of opportunities, information, support, and resources provided by the organization. Respondents rated structural empowerment on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 5 indicating "strongly agree." This scale is appropriate for this context because it provides flexibility for respondents to give specific feedback about their work environment (DeVellis, 2017).

2.2. Organizational Commitment

Meyer and Allen's (2021) commitment scale was used to measure social workers' commitment to the organization. This scale assesses three dimensions of commitment: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment, which are widely used in commitment studies for their high validity in organizational contexts (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

2.3. Social Work Competency

Social work competency was measured based on knowledge, skills, values, and ethics. The items in this scale were adapted from de Jong et al. (2023) and customized for the Malaysian social work context. Measuring competency in social work is important because it affects the quality of services delivered to clients (Healy, 2014).

Data were collected from 300 social workers across several states selected randomly. Stratified sampling was used to ensure fair representation between urban and rural social workers (Babbie, 2020). The collected data were analysed using multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between structural empowerment, commitment, and competency. Mediation testing was conducted using the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach to evaluate the role of commitment as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and competency.

3. Findings

The findings indicate a significant relationship between structural empowerment and social work competency, with commitment serving as an important mediator. Regression analysis results indicate:

3.1. Direct Relationship Between Structural Empowerment and Competency

Structural empowerment has a positive and significant direct relationship with social work competency ($\beta = 0.402, p < 0.001$). This shows that social workers who feel their organization provides adequate opportunities, information, support, and resources have a higher level of competency in knowledge, skills, values, and ethics.

3.2. The Role of Commitment as a Mediator

Commitment acts as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and competency. The analysis shows a significant relationship between structural empowerment and commitment ($\beta = 0.493, p < 0.001$) and between commitment and competency ($\beta = 0.214, p < 0.01$). This suggests that structural empowerment can enhance social workers' commitment, which, in turn, boosts their competency in social work.

3.3. Analysis of Indirect Effects Through Commitment:

The indirect effect of structural empowerment on competency through commitment is significant, with a coefficient of ($\beta = 0.105, p < 0.01$). This indicates that commitment plays an essential role in strengthening the relationship between structural empowerment and competency. Social workers with high commitment levels are more likely to effectively utilize opportunities, support, information, and resources, thus enhancing their competency.

3.4. Commitment as a Protective Factor Against Burnout

The study also found that high commitment can reduce burnout among social workers, particularly in challenging work environments. Social workers with high commitment are more resilient and better able to cope with work pressures, which directly contributes to increased work competency.

4. Discussion

These findings support previous studies that emphasize the importance of structural empowerment in enhancing social work competency. However, these results also demonstrate that commitment is a crucial intermediary factor in this relationship. When social workers feel that their organization cares about their well-being and career development, they tend to show higher commitment levels. This commitment not only increases intrinsic motivation but also helps social workers overcome stress and challenges in their work, thereby strengthening their competency in carrying out social work tasks.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that commitment plays an essential role as a mediator in the relationship between structural empowerment and competency among social workers. By providing adequate

structural empowerment, organizations can increase the commitment of their social workers, which in turn enhances their competency in knowledge, skills, values, and ethics. In the challenging context of social work, high commitment helps social workers to overcome obstacles more effectively and achieve satisfaction in performing their duties.

These findings emphasize the importance of organizational support in strengthening social workers' commitment through consistent structural empowerment. With strong commitment, social workers will be more resilient and able to deliver high-quality services, directly impacting the well-being of the communities they serve. Social organizations are encouraged to continue empowering work structures that support career development, provide training opportunities, and foster a positive work environment so that social workers' commitment and competency can continuously improve.

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