

The Mediator Role of Employee Empowerment on the Effect of Organizational Learning on Innovation

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Abstract

The requests and needs of consumers change rapidly in parallel to rapidly changing and improving global world. As a result, organizations have to strive with this rapid change and improvement, and even start the change. One of the newest and the main weapons that an organization could have to survive and stand against national and international threats is innovation. Organizations should place importance on such a strong competition tool and search for ways to make sustainable innovation happen. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate that organizational learning increases innovation through obtaining, sharing, evaluating, using and storing information. Additionally, the purpose is to demonstrate that employee empowerment plays a mediator role in the effect of organizational learning on innovation. In this research study conducted with 140 employees of a factory that exports to more than 50 countries, structural equation modelling and LISREL software were used. The analyses showed that the vision and open mindedness dimensions of organizational learning affects innovation types (process, strategy, market, product) significantly and positively. Additionally, employee empowerment affects only strategy and product innovation significantly and positively. On the other hand, employee empowerment plays a mediator role in all the relationships between vision and open mindedness, and strategy and product innovation.

Keywords: Organizational learning, Open-mindedness, Shared vision, Employee empowerment, Innovation

Örgütsel Öğrenmenin İnovasyona Etkisinde Personel Güçlendirmenin Aracılık Rolü

Öz

Hızla değişen ve gelişen küresel dünyaya paralel olarak, tüketicilerin istek ve ihtiyaçları da hızla değişmektedir. Bunun neticesinde örgütler, bu hızlı değişim ve gelişimle mücadele etmeye hatta değişimi başlatmaya mecbur kalmaktadır. Bir örgütün hayatta kalmasına engel olabilecek ulusal ve uluslararası tehditlere karşı en yeni ve ana




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silahlardan biri yeniliktir. Böylesine güçlü bir rekabet aracına, örgütler gereken önemi vermeli ve sürdürülebilir yeniliği nasıl yapabileceklerinin yollarını aramalıdır. Bu nedenle bilgiyi elde edip bu bilgiyi paylaşma, onu değerlendirme, kullanma ve depolama yoluyla örgütün genel olarak potansiyel kavrama kapasitesini yükseltmesine yardımcı olan örgütsel öğrenmenin yeniliği artırdığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca bu ana amacın yanında örgütsel öğrenmenin yeniliğe olan etkisinde personel güçlendirmenin aracı bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. 50'den fazla ülkeye ihracat yapan bir fabrikanın 140 çalışanı üzerinde gerçekleştirilen bu araştırmada yapısal eşitlik modellemesinden faydalanılmış ve LISREL programı kullanılmıştır. Yapılan analizler sonucu örgütsel öğrenmenin alt boyutlarından paylaşılan vizyon ve açık görüşlülüğün tüm yenilik türlerini (süreç, strateji, pazar, ürün) anlamlı ve olumlu olarak etkilediği görülmüştür. Bunun yanı sıra personel güçlendirmenin sadece strateji ve ürün yeniliğini anlamlı ve olumlu olarak etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Diğer yandan personel güçlendirme, paylaşılan vizyon ve açık görüşlülük ile strateji ve ürün yeniliği ilişkilerinin tümünde aracı rol oynamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Örgütsel öğrenme, Açık Görüşlülük, Paylaşılan Vizyon, Personel Güçlendirme, İnovasyon

1. INTRODUCTION

In this age of rapid change, environmental elements such as taste of consumers, technology, employees, organizational culture, shareholders, competitors, governments, society, and science change and improve rapidly. When this situation is combined with fierce competition due to globalization, the superiority of companies in survival could only be achieved through innovation. Innovation is an important resource in terms of increasing welfare level of not only companies but societies as well.

1.1. Innovation

Schumpeter (1939) who has conducted important studies on innovation describes innovation as new products, new methods, new supply resources, new markets, and new processes that organizations use to organize new work (Gonzalo, 2008, s.185). According to Porter, the concept of innovation that includes new technologies and new business techniques that provide competitive advantage (Satı, 2011, s.538) is defined as a concept, application or an object that is perceived as new by individuals (Rogers, 1995, s.11). Afuah (2003) describes innovation as the production of goods or services by using new information related to the market in order to meet customer needs. In other words, to provide products or services for clients who may or may not be aware of their needs.

Innovation can be examined from the perspective of providing benefits to national economies. Innovation was demonstrated as one of the most important dynamics that bring economical growth by researchers (Solow, 1956, s.1994). Organizations that take share from international markets

through innovations they developed for themselves contribute to country's economy by increasing exports. Developments such as developing new products and services, accessing to new energy resources increase international competitive power by reducing the country's foreign-source dependency (Uzkurt, 2008, s.20). From a wholistic perspective, efficiency, new energy resources, qualified human resources, new information, decrease in costs and increase in exports contribute to national economy significantly. Also, as a natural result of innovation's nature of expansion, an innovation starting from somewhere would contribute to other actors being involved in innovation. So, due to innovativeness, organizations that trigger each other in the nation would emerge.

In a global world, organizations can not achieve competitive power only with production. To gain competitive advantage can only be possible with innovation and making it sustainable. Therefore, it became important for employees to improve creativity and provide new ideas related to work environment and work (Kabakçı, 2008). Organizations need innovation not to be able to enter new competitive environments but to maintain their existence in the current market (Timuroğlu, 2010, s.96). Innovation has several effects such as having a wide range of products, reducing costs, increasing profit, increasing employee motivation. It also has effects such as bringing in talented and creative human resources to the organization (Vıdır, 2007). Another important aspect of innovation is that it allows organizations to be a pioneer in the market or maintain their pioneer status and provide competitive advantage over competitors. Innovation increases customer satisfaction and provides new needs to them. Fast distribution of information due to technology made organizations' unique characteristics to be imitated. That is why, organizations can remove their competitors moves by making innovation sustainable. It is evident that innovation has an important role in gaining sustainable competitive advantage in rapidly changing and developing markets.

It would be beneficial to mention innovation's effect on social life. Innovation is the key to the quality of life for societies (Şirin, 2017). In other words, innovations make people's lives easier. New inventions provide several benefits for people.

1.2. Organizational Learning

According to McGill, Slocum & Lei (1992), organizational learning is a the ability to gain perspective and understanding skills through experiences gained from organization's observations, experiments and analyses, and willingness to evaluate mistakes made and successes achieved. Obtaining information and sharing it, evaluating, using and storing information is defined as a process that helps an organization to understand the environmental changes by increasing the organization's potential comprehension capacity (Wang, 2003, s.8).

The characteristics of organizational learning can be summarized as below (Seymen, 2002, s.45).

Organizational learning is a process that involves change in both behaviors and organizational structure. It supports the transition from individual learning to collective learning.

Organizational learning is a process that gives the responsibility to individuals and considers individuals as learning bodies, and requires active participation of all the members of the organization.

Organizational learning occurs at different levels and pace based on the outcomes of activities.

Organizational learning is a dynamic process that is based on constant change.

Although organizational learning leads to positive outcomes, these outcomes may not always be right or good. This is the same in individual and informal learning as well.

Organizational learning means gathering new information from all internal and external elements of the organization. Organizational learning defines a broad scope within this aspect.

Organizational learning has a characteristic that paves the way for new organizational knowledge production. Organizational knowledge production is vital and important in terms of adapting to environment and create/sustain competitive advantages.

Information learned and experience gained through organizational learning can be used immediately as well as stored in the organization's memory to be used later. This characteristic requires the presence of organizational memory.

Organizational learning leads to an organizational structure that encourages learning at all levels of the organization, emphasizes on improving employees, and fosters constructive dialogue. Thus, it aims to create an environment that provides an opportunity for individuals to improve and to create a system that is in constant change with the potential obtained (Kalkan, 2007, s.404).

1.3. Employee Empowerment

Vogt (1990) describes employee empowerment as managerial concept that is developed to increase employee motivation and involve employees in the decision making process in alignment with the concept. In other words, managers make the employees stronger for the company by sharing information related to the organization and the authority to make decision with employees. Empowering causes employees to take ownership which increases motivation and leads to the feeling of success (Boone and Kurtz, 2013, s.170). This situation can be provided by transferring power to those who are weaker than others (Brown and Kanter, 1982, s.7.). Therefore, through employee empowerment, employees develop organizational loyalty and get motivated. Conger & Kanungo (1988) expanded on Vogt's (1990) definition and defined employee empowerment as the process in which identification of elements that

reduce superiority in organizations and help members of the organization to gain confidence by eliminating these elements. This situation can be explained by minimizing the factors that reduce effectiveness in the organization and help employees who are the main factor to increase efficiency, to gain confidence through multiple ways. Ripley (1990) defines employee empowerment from three different lenses. In the first lens, he considers employee empowerment as a concept and defines it as giving certain authorities and managerial privileges, in other words appreciation and affirmation, to employees. In the second lens, he considers it within the concept of philosophy and describes it as providing opportunities for staff to reach personal and organizational goals in alignment with the shared vision in the organization. Lastly, he considers this concept within organizational behavior by describing it as gathering staff under one structure, improving their knowledge and skills to the highest level, in order for organization to be successful.

Sharing information, being involved in decisions, responsibility, team work, flexibility, management support, accessing resources, education, improvement, open communication, and confidence are considered as employee empowerment elements.

2. METHOD

2.1. The Purpose and Significance of the Study

Change and innovation are among the keys for the strategic success in organizations. This innovation can sometimes occur in the product, or sometimes in strategy, or even in a different process. However, it is not as easy as it seems to be an innovative organization. Innovation can not be achieved by only engineering activities. In addition to this, it is necessary to provide sustainability and commercialization. Therefore, innovation is an organizational activity and concerns the whole organization. This research study is significant in terms of creating an organizational structure that would increase innovation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how organizational learning affects innovation and what kind of a role employee empowerment plays in this effect. Within this context, the aim is to determine that vision and open-mindedness increase both employee empowerment and innovation. Additionally, departing from the fact that employee empowerment would increase innovation, the purpose is also to determine the mediator role of shared vision and open-mindedness on the increasing effect on innovation.

2.2. Hypotheses

Rahimian et al. (2014) revealed significant relationships between employee empowerment and the dimensions of organizational learning.

Mishra & Bhaskar (2010) determined that the employee empowerment increases as the organizational learning increases. More employee

empowerment practices are seen in structures where organizational learning is present.

Alegre & Chiva (2008) examined the relationship between organizational learning and innovation in the study they conducted with ceramic manufacturers in Spain and Italy. They emphasized that participation, a dimension of organizational learning, has a significant and positive relationship with innovation.

According to Baker and Sinkula (1999), shared vision provides a goal and a sense of direction to members of the organization. Additionally, Calantone et al. (2002) and Sampaio & Perin (2004) stated that shared vision is important to focus on innovation in organizations.

Ussahawanitchakit (2008) determined that shared vision affects innovation indirectly.

Nguyen (2006) stated that open mindedness is closely related to the ability of organizations to handle technology and unstable market conditions.

Education is an essential piece of organizational learning and employee empowerment. Turko (2016) showed the effect of planning and education on entrepreneurship.

Keeny & Reedy (2007) showed the positive and significant effect of employee empowerment on all types of innovation.

Panuwatwanich et al. (2008) identified that employee empowerment has a significant and positive effect on all innovation outcomes in the study they conducted in engineering and architecture companies.

Wan et al. (2003) stated that decentralization that provides employee empowerment affects all innovations positively in a study they conducted in Singapore.

Çavuş ve Akgemci (2008) showed a significant relationship between employee empowerment and innovativeness in a study they conducted in Turkey's biggest 500 companies, and stated that employee empowerment relatively explains 47.8% of innovativeness. Also, according to Akgemci (2007) employee empowerment accelerates that innovation process and encourages employees to be innovative. Spreitzer (1995) determined a positive relationship between employee empowerment and managerial effectiveness and innovativeness in a study conducted with 393 managers from Fortune 50 organizations.

Based on the information provided above, following hypotheses were developed:

H₁: As **a)** open-mindedness, and **b)** shared vision, dimensions of organizational learning, increase, employee empowerment also increases.

H₂: As the open-mindedness dimension of organizational learning increases, **a)** process innovation, **b)** strategy innovation, **c)** market innovation, and **d)** product innovation also increase.

H₃: As shared vision, dimension of organizational learning, increases, **a)** process innovation, **b)** strategy innovation, **c)** market innovation, **d)** product innovation increase.

H₄: As employee empowerment increases, **a)** process innovation, **b)** strategy innovation, **c)** market innovation, and **d)** product innovation increase.

H₅: Employee empowerment plays an increasing mediator role in the relationship between open-mindedness and **a)** process innovation, **b)** strategy innovation, **c)** market innovation, and **d)** product innovation.

H₆: Employee empowerment plays a mediator role with an increasing effects in the relationship between shared vision and **a)** process innovation, **b)** strategy innovation, **c)** market innovation, **d)** product innovation.

Figure 1 represents the research model with the hypotheses listed above.

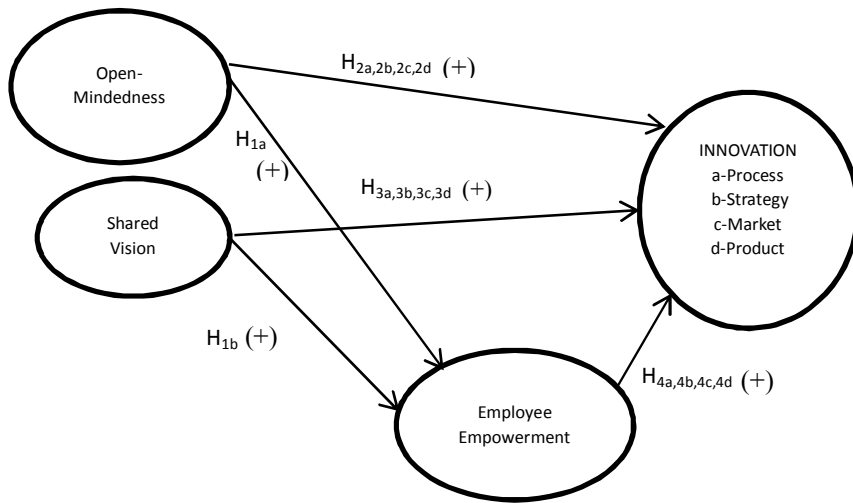


Figure 1: Research Model

2.3. Sample and Data Collection

This study was conducted in a factory in Kayseri that belongs to one of the leading organizations in machine-woven carpet production in Turkey. One of the reasons for selecting this organization is the fact that it exports products in nearly 50 countries in 5 continents. 300 employees of the factory in Kayseri were selected as the population for this study. The sample size for the study was calculated to be 169 with a 95% confidence interval and 5% error margin (https://www.survey_system.com/sscalc.htm).

Random sampling was used and survey forms were distributed to 175 employees considering the possibility of mistakes in responses. 140 of the distributed forms were collected within 10 business days. Some of the responses were not included in the study due to missing information in the

surveys and the presence of outliers so that the analyses would be accurate. As a result, the data obtained from 140 surveys were analyzed.

2.4. Research Instrument

The scales used in this research are explained below. First, an item analysis was performed and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of the surveys were examined. Both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were used to test the reliability of the scales. Additionally, the content, convergence and divergence validities were evaluated. In order to provide face validity, surveys were translated and back-translated. As the surveys were in different languages, they were first translated to English by experts and then were translated back to the original language. No semantic shift was determined.

Organizational Learning: The first section of the survey was adapted from Baker&Sinkula in order to measure organizational learning and its dimensions (Sinkula, 1997, Naktiyok ve İşcan, 2014). 11 items were considered in terms of shared vision and open-mindedness dimensions. The Cronbach alpha for reliability value was found to be 0.88 which supports that the scale provides a reliable measurement. One of the benefits of the scale is the ease of evaluation due to having less items.

Employee empowerment: The second section of the survey aims to measure the levels of psychological employee empowerment of employees. 6 questions, measuring the psychological empowerment level, were adapted from the survey developed by Spreitzer (1995). The Cronbach alpha reliability value was found to be .83 which indicates that the scale provides a reliable measurement of job satisfaction attitude.

Innovation: The scale for measuring innovation consists of 24 items. This scale was adapted from Vila & Kuster (2007) departing from Henard & Szymanski's (2001) research. In this scale, organizational innovation is addressed in four dimensions that are; product innovation, strategy innovation, process innovation, and market innovation. After the adjustments made, there are 3 questions on product innovation, 3 questions on strategic innovation, 3 questions on process innovation, and 3 questions on market innovation. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the scale was found to be .89. All the scales used are 5-point Likert scales ranging between 1: very bad and 5: very good.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to test the structural validity of the scales used and the results of the test are presented in Table 1a and Figure 2,3,4. Overall, all the scales had a high level of validity.

3. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

27.4% of the participants were in the 25 years of age and below, 39.5% were in the 24-40 age group, and 33.1% were above 40 years of age. Also, 61.2% of the participants were males and 38.8% were females.

LISREL 9,1 packet program was used to perform a confirmatory factor analysis on the data collected to determine the dimensions of variables. After the confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis was conducted with a structural equation model and hypotheses test results are presented.

Table 1a: Goodness of Fit Indexes Obtained in the Confirmatory Factor Analyses

	χ^2	(sd)	χ^2/sd	CFI/GFI	NFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Organizational Learning	67,61	43	1,57	0,98/0,92	0,95	0,88	0,064
Employee Empowerment	14,02	7	2,00	0,99/0,97	0,98	0,90	0,085
Innovation	76,13	48	1,58	0,97/0,92	0,92	0,86	0,065

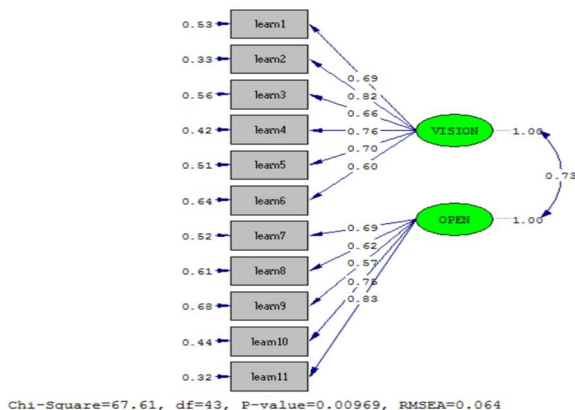
Table 1b: Goodness of Fit Index Acceptance Values

Goodness of Fit Unit	Definition	Good Values of Fit	Acceptable Fit Values
χ^2 /df	Aims to reduce the sensitivity of χ^2 statistics in sampling size.	$\chi^2 /df \leq 2$	$\chi^2 /df \leq 5$
RMSEA	The unit that can be used to prevent rejection of a model with a big sampling size, based only on χ^2 statistics.	$0.00 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$
AGFI	An index used to eliminate the deficiency of GFI test in a big sampling volume.	$0.90 \leq AGFI \leq 1.00$	$0.80 \leq A GFI \leq 0.90$
CFI	Compares the fitness of the current model with the hypothesis model that constrains the correlation and covariance between the latent variables to zero.	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 0.95$
NFI	This index measures the compatibility of the proposed model with the null hypothesis. Also, it measures the goodness of fit between models.	$0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1.00$	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 0.95$

Source: Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger, 2003; Şimşek, 2007.

According to Table 1a, all the variables showed a good fit in the confirmatory factor analysis. Figure 2,3 and 4 presents findings related to the concepts in the research model:

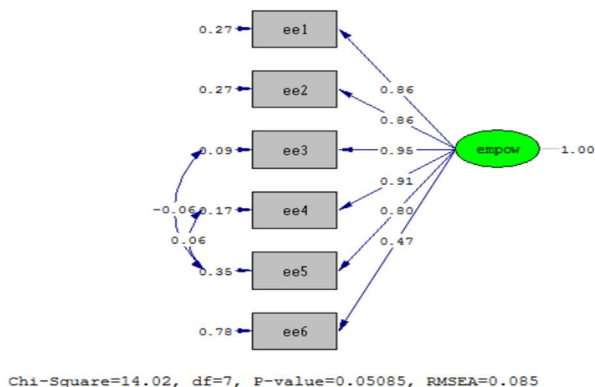
Figure 2: Standardized Values of Organizational Learning Dimensions in Confirmatory Factor Analysis



vision=shared vision; open=open-mindedness

According to Figure 2, none of the standardized values were found to be over 1. Also, t-values were evaluated and as the goodness of fit values were good, all the questions were included in the model. In figure 3, CFA analysis results related to employee empowerment are presented.

Figure 3: Standardized Values of Employee Empowerment in Confirmatory Factor Analysis

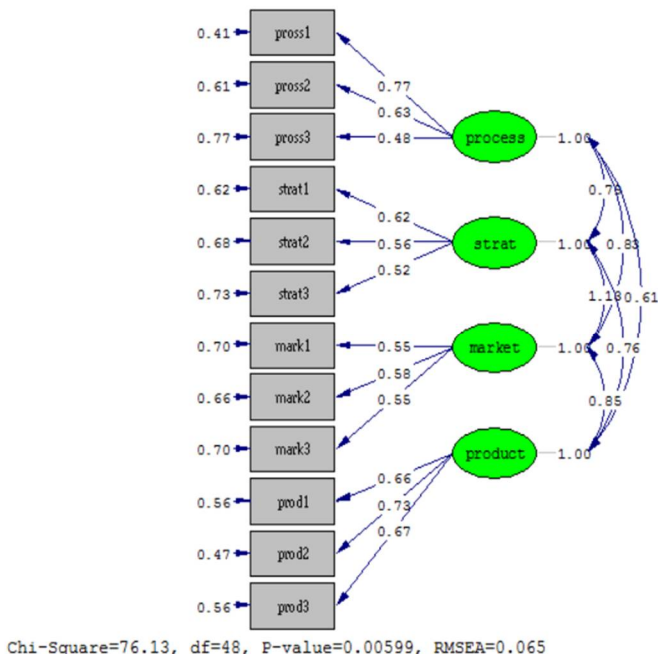


empow=employee empowerment

In figure 3, no standardized value over 1 was found. t-values were evaluated and as the goodness of fit values were good, all the questions were included in the model. However, in order for fitness to increase, questions 3,4,

and 5 were modified and tied, then included in the model. CFA analysis results related to innovation are presented in figure 4.

Figure 4: Standardized Values of Innovation Dimensions in Confirmatory Factor Analysis



process=process innovation, strategy=strategy innovation, market=market innovation, and product=product innovation

There were no standardized values over 1 according to figure 4. Also, t-values were evaluated and fitness values were good. Therefore, all the questions were included in the model.

Statistical values and correlation coefficients of the variables in the study are presented with Cronbach alpha values presented in the corner in table 3:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient of the Variables

Variable	Mean	St. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1-Shared vision	3,64	0,86	1						
2-Open-mindedness	3.12	0,97	,627**	1					
3-Employee	4,30	0,85	,449**	,360**	1				

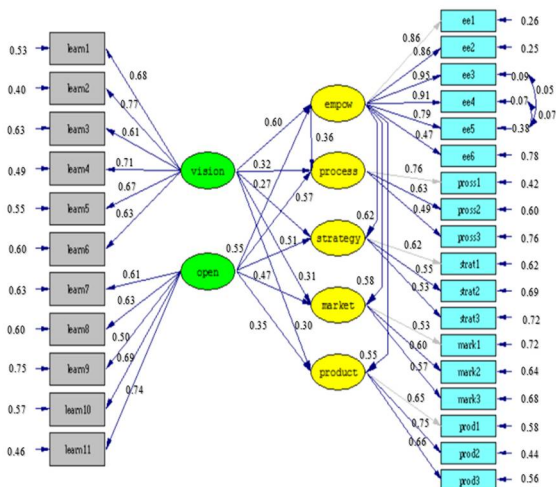
Empowerment						
4-Process innovation.	3,38	0,72	,319**	,345**	,174*	1
5-Strategy Innov.	3,35	0,68	,217*	,326**	,253**	,448** 1
6-Market Innov.	3,61	0,78	,292**	,245**	,291**	,417** ,493** 1
7-Product Innov.	3,70	0,79	,250**	,248**	,273**	,451** ,415** ,703** 1

** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level. * Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level.

When table 2 is examined, it can be seen that all the variables in the study are interrelated. All the dimensions of innovation and employee empowerment have significant and positive relationships. However, these relationships are not strong. There are significant and positive relationships between the shared vision and open-mindedness dimensions of organizational learning and all the dimensions of innovation. Additionally, significantly positive relationships were determined between employee empowerment and open-mindedness and shared vision.

The model as a whole and whether the hypotheses are confirmed can be tested with a path analysis. The abbreviations used are; vision=shared vision; open=open-mindedness, empow=employee empowerment, process=process innovation, strategy=strategy innovation, market=market innovation, and product=product innovation. The results of the path analysis with goodness of fit values and regression coefficients are presented in figure 5:

Figure 5: Path Analysis Results of the Research Model (Standardized)

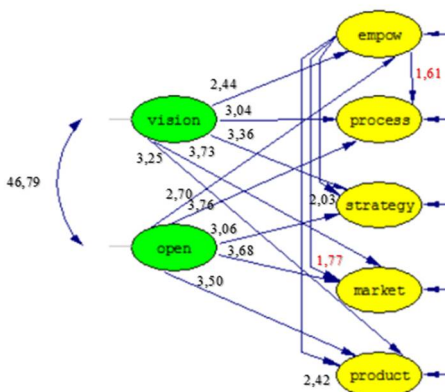


RMSEA= 0,088

$\chi^2= 570.35$ $p= 0,000$ $sd=360$ $\chi^2/ sd= 1,58$
 NFI=0,88 GFI= 0,91 AGFI= 0,85 CFI= 0,95

Variable beta coefficients and goodness of fit values of the model are presented in figure 5. Although a perfect fit is not seen in all indexes of the research model, it still presents an acceptable fit. Also, t-values of the hypotheses are presented in figure 6. The relationship in the red t-values is not significant.

Figure 6: t-Values of the Research Model



According to figure 6, there is no significant relationship between employee empowerment and process innovation, as well as employee empowerment and product innovation. In all the other paths, significant relationships were determined. According to the findings obtained, hypotheses related to direct effects are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Hypotheses Test Results

Path	Hypothesis	Standardized	Result
open → empow	H _{1a}	0,55*	Accepted
vision → empow	H _{1b}	0,60*	Accepted
open → process	H _{2a}	0,57*	Accepted
open → strategy	H _{2b}	0,51*	Accepted
open → market	H _{2c}	0,47*	Accepted
open → product	H _{2d}	0,35*	Accepted
vision → process	H _{3a}	0,32*	Accepted
vision → strategy	H _{3b}	0,27*	Accepted
vision → market	H _{3c}	0,31*	Accepted
vision → product	H _{3d}	0,30*	Accepted
empow → process	H _{4a}	0,36	Rejected
empow → strategy	H _{4b}	0,62*	Accepted

empow →	market		H _{4c}	0,58	Rejected
empow →	product		H _{4d}	0,55*	Accepted
open →	empow	process	H _{5a}	0,21	Rejected
open →	empow	strategy	H _{5b}	0,10*(mediate)	Accepted
open →	empow	market	H _{5c}	0,18	Rejected
open →	empow	product	H _{5d}	0,13*(mediate)	Accepted
vision →	empow	prcess	H _{6a}	0,00	Rejected
vision →	empow	strtegy	H _{6b}	0,09*(mediate)	Accepted
vision →	empow	market	H _{6c}	0,14	Rejected
vision →	empow	prduct	H _{6d}	0,24*(mediate)	Accepted

According to table 3, H₁, H₂, H₃ hypotheses were all (a,b,c,d) accepted. Therefore, in direct effects, all were accepted except for the effect of employee empowerment on process and market innovation.

When testing the mediator role, in order to have the mediator role of job satisfaction in the effects of level of burn out on social loafing of employees, there are three conditions need to be met in the analysis, according to (Baron and Kenny, 1986):

1- Independent variable should have a direct effect on the mediator variable.

2- Independent variable should have a direct effect on the dependent variable.

3- When the mediator variable is included in the regression analysis, the regression coefficient of the independent variable on the dependent variable should decrease and the mediator variable should have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Turunc ve Celik, 2010, s.183, Yıldırım ve Karabey, 2017, s.571).

When figure 2 and table 4 are examined considering these conditions, it is seen that the mediator variable which is job satisfaction, does not have a direct effect on social loafing. Therefore, H_{5a,5b,5c} were rejected. Although all dimensions of burn out have a direct effect on the increase of negative social loafing, there is no effect of job satisfaction. Therefore, there is no mediator role.

When figure 6 and table 3 are examined, it can be seen that employee empowerment does not have a direct effect on process and market innovation. Therefore, there is no mediator role of employee empowerment in the effect of shared vision and open-mindedness on process and market innovation. In indirect effects, H_{5a}, H_{5c}, H_{6a} and H_{6c} hypotheses were refuted. On the other hand, hypotheses of strategy and product innovation that are affected directly by shared vision and open-mindedness were tested. Test results showed an indirect effect and the coefficients are presented in table 3. Therefore, H_{5b}, H_{5d}, H_{6b} and H_{6d} hypotheses were accepted.

4. CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

There were 140 participants in the study conducted in an organization manufacturing in Kayseri and exports rugs to more than 50 countries. According to the results, 16 hypotheses were accepted and 6 hypotheses were refuted. The analysis of the responses showed that mean for shared vision dimension was 3.64 while open-mindedness was 3.12. Although the mean is not high, it can be said there is a learning directionality. The mean for employee empowerment was high with a value of 4.30 while process innovation was 3.38, strategy innovation 3.35, market innovation 3.61, and product innovation was 3.70. This indicates the presence of innovation in the organization.

In fact, almost every organization learn from its environment and innovates at a certain level to survive. The purpose of this study is show how organizational learning and employee empowerment levels affect innovation. The structural equation model analysis performed within this scope showed as the level of shared vision and open-mindedness increases, all the dimensions (process, strategy, market, and product) of innovation increase. Timuroğlu (2010) investigated innovation as a one dimension and determined that learning directionality affects innovation. Similarly, Calantone et al. (2002), and Hult et al. (2002) determined that relationship of learning directionality and innovation. Paying attention to ideas, sharing of information, having an innovative vision, and embrace of the vision by employees create an environment that boosts innovation in organizations.

When the model where the level of employee empowerment affects innovation is evaluated, it can be seen that employee empowerment does not affect process and market innovation. In fact, this is not an expected result. The reason for this result can be explained by the fact that the study was conducted with factory employees. It is possible employees had not perceived market innovations completely and that their awareness of process innovations may be low. However, as the level of employee empowerment increased, both the levels of strategic innovation and product innovation increased. This was an expected result. A study conducted by Spreitzer (1995) where the participants consisted of 393 managers in Fortune 50 companies demonstrated that employee empowerment increases innovation in a study he conducted. So, team work, being involved in decision making, regular training of employees, a decentralized structure support innovation.

One of the important results of this study is that employee empowerment plays a mediator role on the effect of shared vision on strategy and product innovation. In organizations where organizational learning structure is embraced, employee empowerment increases and leads to an increase on strategy and product innovation. This supports the hypotheses. Sharing and embracing vision in an organization increases involvement in decisions, training, and decentralized structure which leads the organization to innovate on its strategy and products to compete in the market.

Another result is the mediator role employee empowerment plays on the effect of open-mindedness on strategy and product innovation. In other words, putting emphasis on opinions and sharing information affect the training and involvement of employees in decisions positively. This would lead to an increase on the innovation of strategy and product.

The results of this study provides information to managers on how to increase innovation which is one of the keys for success. The research and development practices and engineering activities are crucial for innovation. However, it is not possible to innovate with only these activities. Organizational structures need to be supported with certain applications. Within this context, organizations should improve their learning directionalities and adopt organizational learning. Additionally, they need to apply employee empowerment practices within their organizations. Applications such as a decentralized structure, involvement in decisions, sharing risks and responsibilities, team work, storing and sharing information would benefit organizations in terms of innovation. Leaders of developing countries search for ways to increase innovation in their countries. Within this scope, the results of this study is also important for them. Governments should increase environments to provide information to organizations and improve organizations' visions. In addition to this, governments should provide financial and educational support for organizations which implement employee empowerment.

This study is not without limitations. As this study was conducted with only one factory employees, the data obtained is limited. It would be beneficial to conduct this study with employees from different organizations. Also, this study was perceptual as instant data collection was used. For future research, identification of organizations' innovations and determination of organizational learning indicators over a period of time is recommended.

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Özet

Örgütlerde stratejik başarının anahtarları arasında değişim ve inovasyon bulunmaktadır. Bu yenilik bazen üründe bazen stratejide bazen de başka bir süreçte olabilir. Ancak yenilikçi bir örgüt olmak görüldüğü gibi kolay değildir. İnovasyon sadece bir takım mühendislik faaliyetleriyle gerçekleştirilemez. Bunun yanı sıra sürekliliği ve ticarileştirilmesini sağlamak gereklidir. Bu nedenle inovasyon örgütsel bir faaliyettir ve tüm örgütü ilgilendirir. Bu araştırma, yeniliği artıracak bir örgütsel yapının oluşturulması için önem arz etmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada örgütsel öğrenmenin inovasyonu nasıl etkilediği ve bu etkide personel güçlendirmenin nasıl bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır.

Kayseri ilinde üretim yapan ve 50'den fazla ülkeye halılarını satan bir işletmede gerçekleştirilen çalışmaya 140 çalışan katılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre 16 hipotez kabul edilmiş, 6 hipotez ise reddedilmiştir. Çeşitli kademelerde çalışanların verdiği cevaplara yapılan analiz sonuçlarına göre

örgütsel öğrenme alt boyutlarından paylaşılan vizyon ortalaması 3,64, açık görüşlülük ise 3,12 dir. Bu duruma göre ortalama olarak yüksek olmamakla beraber öğrenme yönlülüğün varlığından söz edilebilir. Bunun dışında personel güçlendirmenin ortalaması 4,30'la oldukça yüksek çıkmıştır. Diğer taraftan süreç yeniliği 3,38, strateji yeniliği 3,35, pazar yeniliği 3,61 ve ürün yeniliği ise 3,70 dir. Bu durum örgütte inovasyonun var olduğunun göstergesidir.

Aslında hemen her örgüt hayatta kalabilmek için yaşadığı çevreden öğrenir ve belirli düzeyde yenilik yapar. Bu çalışmada asıl ortaya konmak istenen örgütsel öğrenme ve personel güçlendirme düzeyinin inovasyonu nasıl etkilediğidir? Bu bağlamda gerçekleştirilen yapısal eşitlik modellemesi analizine göre paylaşılan vizyon ve açık görüşlülük düzeyi arttıkça, inovasyonun tüm alt boyutlarının (süreç, strateji, pazar ve ürün) düzeyi artmaktadır. Timuroğlu (2010) yaptığı çalışmada yeniliği tek boyut olarak ele almış ve öğrenme yönlülüğün yeniliği etkilediği sonucunu tespit etmiştir. Benzer şekilde Calantone vd. (2002) ve Hult vd. (2002) öğrenme yönlülük ile yeniliğin ilişkilerini ortaya koymuşlardır. Örgütlerde fikirlere önem verilmesi, bilginin paylaşılması, vizyonun yenilikçi olması ve çalışanların vizyonu benimsemesi gibi durumlar yeniliği artıracak bir ortam sunar.

Personel güçlendirme düzeyinin inovasyonu etkilediği modele bakıldığında, personel güçlendirmenin süreç ve pazar yeniliğinin etkilemediği görülmektedir. Aslında bu beklenen bir sonuç değildir. Bunun nedeni olarak araştırmanın genel olarak fabrika çalışanları üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiş olması gösterilebilir. Çalışanların, pazardaki yenilikleri tam olarak doğru algılamamış olabilmeleri ve ayrıca süreçlerle ilgili yeniliklerin farkındalığının düşük olmasından kaynaklanabilir. Buna karşın personel güçlendirme düzeyi arttıkça hem stratejik yenilik düzeyi hem de ürün yeniliği düzeyi artmıştır. Bu beklenen bir sonuçtur. Spreitzer (1995) Fortune 50 listesinde yer alan işletmelerden 393 yöneticiyi kapsayan çalışmada personel güçlendirmenin inovasyonu artırdığını ortaya koymuştur. Yani takım çalışması, kararlara katılım, çalışanların düzenli eğitimi, adem-i merkezîyetçi yapı inovasyonu destekler niteliktedir.

Araştırmanın önemli sonuçlarından birisi de paylaşılan vizyonun, strateji yeniliği ve ürün yeniliğine etkisinde personel güçlendirmenin oynadığı aracı roldür. Öyle ki örgütsel öğrenme yapısına sahip işletmelerde personel güçlendirme artmakta, personel güçlendirme ise strateji yeniliği ve ürün yeniliğini artırmaktadır. Bu durum hipotezleri desteklemektedir. Örgütte vizyonun paylaşılması ve benimsenmesi beraberinde kararlara katılımı, eğitimi, adem-i merkezîyetçiliği artırmaktadır. Bunun neticesinde örgüt rekabete ayak uydurabilmek için stratejisini ve ürünlerini yenilemektedir.

Bir diğer sonuç ise açık görüşlülüğün, strateji yeniliği ve ürün yeniliğine etkisinde personel güçlendirmenin aracı rol oynamasıdır. Daha açık bir ifade ile fikirlere önem verilmesi, bilginin paylaşılması beraberinde çalışanların eğitimini ve kararlara katılımı olumlu olarak etkiler. Bu durumda strateji ve ürün yeniliğinin artmasına vesile olur.

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları örgüt yöneticilerine, başarının en önemli anahtarlarından birisi olan inovasyonu artırmak için yol göstermektedir.

İnovasyon için arge arařtırmalarının ve mühendislik faaliyetlerinin önemi tartışılmazdır. Ancak sadece bu faaliyetlerle inovasyon yapmak mümkün değildir. Örgütsel yapıların bir takım uygulamalarla desteklenmesi gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda örgütler öğrenme yönlülüklerini geliřtirmeli ve örgütsel öğrenmeye sahip olmalıdırlar. Bunun yanı sıra personel güçlendirme uygulamalarını örgütlerinde uygulamalıdırlar. Yani adem-i merkezietçi bir yapı, kararlara katılım, riski ve sorumluluđu bölüřmek, takım çalıřması, bilginin depolanması ve paylařımı gibi uygulamalar yenilik ile ilgili faydalar sunacaktır. Ayrıca geliřmekte olan ülkelerin yöneticileri, ülkelerinde inovasyonu artırmanın yollarını aramaktadır. Bu bağlamda bu arařtırmanın sonuçları onlar içinde önemlidir. Hükümetler örgütlere bilgi sunacak ortamları artırmalı ve örgütlerin vizyonlarını geliřtirmelidir. Bunun yanı sıra personel güçlendirme uygulayacak örgütleri maddi olarak ve eđitimsel olarak desteklemelidir.

Her çalıřma gibi bu çalıřmanın da bazı sınırlılıkları vardır. Bu çalıřmada alan arařtırması yalnızca bir fabrikanın çalıřanları üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiř olup, elde edilen verilerle sınırlıdır. Gelecekteki arařtırmaların farklı işletmelerde yer çalıřanlar üzerinde gerçekleştirilmesi yararlı olacaktır. Ayrıca bu arařtırma anlık veri toplama ile algısal olarak gerçekleştirilmiřtir. Gelecekte yapılacak çalıřmalara yıllara yaygın olarak örgütlerin yaptıđı yenilikleri tespit etmek ve örgütsel öğrenme göstergelerini ortaya koymak önerilir.