The Effect of Managerial Power on Employees' Affective Commitment: Case Study

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Abstract

This study explored the effect of managerial power on employees' affective commitment using social exchange theory. It was applicable-descriptive and the research sample included *185* managers of the Social Security Organization of Fars Province. The required data was collected via a researcher self-made questionnaire that consisted of two sections of managerial power and affective commitment. Validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by five professors and its reliability was obtained equal to *0.89* via Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The data was analyzed through Amos*19* and EQS*6.1* software. Two important findings were obtained. First, there was a positive and significant relationship between expert power, legitimate power, referent power, reward power and coercive power with affective commitment. Second, reward power had the highest effect and coercive power had the lowest effect on employees' affective commitment. The findings revealed that desirable perceptions of employees from the manager's power in the framework of social exchange will lead to positive consequences such as affective commitment.

Keywords: Manager Power, Affective Commitment, Social Exchange Theory, Social Security Organization

Introduction

Any organizational manager or leader needs power to influence employees' behavior and leaders cannot be effective at their workplace without power and proper use of it. They have to enjoy various powers in order to influence employees' behavior and without it, they cannot be successful. Power empowers the leader; thus it is the potential ability of a person to affect the individual or group's behavior in the intended direction (Luthans, 1989, p. 430). Organizational commitment has been used as a tool to decrease employee turnover and absenteeism (McMurray, Scott, & Pace, 2004) and can reduce the expenses of human resource management by reducing employee turnover which imposes huge costs on the organization (Brunetto et al., 2012).

Employee commitment can be explained via social exchange theory, where the employee-manager relationship can be regarded as a mutual exchange process of resources according to this theory that includes permanent offering of the benefits and re-establishment of balance among the expectations and obligations. Mutual obligations among the employees and managers may be due to formal contracts that are included in the employment contract or indicate expectations that appear in the form of unwritten psychological contracts. Employees try to compensate based on their perception of these obligations. Affective commitment, that is the individual's affective attachment to the organization, is an important concept to perceive loyalty to the organization and employees' self-sacrifice for the organization.

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It is the most important dimension of organizational commitment that could be used to predict job behaviors, absenteeism, and turnover intention. Results of a meta-analysis that was conducted recently disclosed that among three dimensions of organizational commitment, affective commitment had the strongest and most positive correlation with desirable job consequences such as paying more attention to performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Meyer et al., *2002*).

Whenever employees' affective commitment is stronger, their durability in the organization will be higher and thus they try more for the organization. As a result, it can be stated that affective commitment shows total organizational commitment. Therefore, affective commitment is focused in this study instead on the two dimensions of continuance commitment and normative commitment. Given that employees who are committed highly to the organization intend to stay within the organization and show positive job behaviors, most companies have perceived the value of increased organizational commitment of employees and the importance of perceiving its determining factors. Hence, reinforcement of commitment has been converted into one of the major preoccupations of contemporary organizations to retain talented employees in knowledge-oriented economies (Neininger et al., *2010*).

Although determinants of organizational commitment like leadership behavior have been studied in the literature on organizational behavior, managerial power as one of the important determinants of affective commitment has been considered less. Thus, the current study tried to explore the effect of managerial power on employees' affective commitment in the Social Security Organization of Fars province. Social exchange theory is used as the theoretical principle which explains the relationship between two variables of management power and organizational commitment. First, the research background in the field of managerial power, affective commitment and social exchange theory will be reviewed. Then a conceptual model of the study and the research hypotheses are proposed. Afterwards, the method of data collection and that of testing the hypotheses will be presented. Finally, the research findings are discussed and conclusions are represented.

2. Theoretical principles and research hypotheses

2.1. Managerial power

Power is one of the important realities of organizational life. Managers should consider power as the indispensable part of job and task and be familiar with how it is used to accelerate realization of their purposes and those of the organization through its proper utilization (Karimi Torghabe, 2005). Studying power and its effects are important to perceive how organizations work. Any interaction and social relationship in an organization may contain power. How the organizational units and people are controlled is related to the subject of power and influence. According to French and Raven (2000), power is the potential action and influence that its holder can exert on others. It is the potential ability in change of behavior, change of the flow of events, dominance over resistances and doing tasks (Senior & Fleming, 2006). Theoreticians of organizational behavior (e.g. Patton (1984), Morgan (1998), Raven & French (1958)) have proposed different typologies of power resources. French and Raven's typology of power is composed of five important sources of power, i.e. coercive power, expert power, legitimate power, referent power, and reward power (Fakhimi, 2007).

- **Coercive power** is based on the belief that a manager has the ability to punish the employees.
- **Expert power** roots in the belief that a manager can provide the special knowledge or a group of highly specialized skills for an individual.
- **Legitimate power** is based on the perception that the manager has the legitimate and legal right to influence the subordinates.
- **Referent power** is on the basis that an individual or a group has tendency to be identified with a person or power holder or imitate his/her tasks.
- **Reward power** is based on the belief that the manager has the ability to provide tangible or intangible incentives. In sum, power is an important part of organizational life and the power sources are effective on people's behavior in organizational life (Belaya & Hanf, 2009). Managers can use different sources of power in organizations. According to Hersey and Blanchard, using each power source depends on employees' level of preparation. In other words, employees' level of preparation is the contingency variable which determines the type of power source that managers should use (Hersey & Blanchard, 2000). The ability to achieve five unique powers including expert power, legitimate power, referent power, reward power and coercive power will enable the leader to affect beneficiaries and colleagues by controlling the organizational resources.

Successful leaders and managers use these powers to influence their employees effectively and leaders have to know that use of the power is important to reinforce leadership (Montana & Charnov, 2008). Previous studies show that commitment is affected by personal characteristics, work experiences, job characteristics, job opportunities, group-leader relations, and organizational characteristics. Moreover, leader's behavior, perceived organizational support and organizational culture are also affected by employees' organizational commitment considerably (Joo et al., 2012).

2.2 Affective commitment

Organizational commitment is one of job attitudes that have a special status among the theoreticians of organizational behavior. Some of these theoreticians consider commitment as a one-dimensional concept and another group has regarded it as a multi-dimensional concept. In this regard, Allen and Meyer's (1997) multi-dimensional model has a special status. They believed that commitment links the individual to the organization and decreases the possibility of his/her turnover (Meyer et al., 2002).

According to some researchers, organizational commitment shows the unique relationship between an individual and the organization which explains the individual's behavior in the organization. Allen and Meyer believe that organizational commitment has three elements.

1) Continuous commitment: The individual calculates the cost of leaving the organization and thinks what he/she will lose and what costs he/she will incur in case of leaving the organization.
2) Normative commitment: In this kind of commitment, the employee feels that he/she should stay at the organization and staying at the organization is a right action.
3) Affective commitment: It refers to affective commitment of the employee with the organization so that people identify themselves with their organization (Luthans, *2008*). Affective commitment is applied to sensitive attachment to the organization, identification with the organization, and involvement in the organization (Ansari & Ardekani, 2012, p. 89; Allen & Meyer, 1997). Some researchers claim that organizational commitment is an affective relationship with a special organization which has three important parameters in the individual's attitude towards the organization (Coyle-Shapiro, Morrow, 2006):

   1) Identification: institutionalization of purposes and values of the organization
   2) Participation: an activity that the employee does as a part of his/her role
   3) Loyalty: sense of attachment to the organization

Since affective commitment reflects feelings and attitudes towards a job and its elements, this dimension has been considered more in organizational commitment literature. Affective commitment means a sense of attachment, interest, and loyalty of the employee to the organization. Researchers of organizational behavior have claimed that affective commitment has four key pre-conditions including personal characteristics, role-related characteristics, structural characteristics, and job experiences (Chen & Francesco, 2003). The focus in this study was Affective commitment, an interest and positive feeling towards the organization, and a sense of pride of the individual as an organizational member. Findings of previous studies reveal that perception of colleagues and the supervisor support has the highest effect on affective commitment of people (Rousseau & Aube, 2010).

Generally, the relationship between affective commitment and organizational outputs such as performance and displacement is more intensive than the other two dimensions. In a study, it was determined that affective commitment in *72* percent of cases has been an important factor in predicting many consequences (e.g. understanding of task characteristics, job satisfaction, and turnover decision) (Robbins, Judje & Hasham, 2009). Allen and Meyer (1997) believed that an individual will feel affective commitment towards the organization when he/she knows organizational purposes as his/her purposes and becomes convinced to help the organization achieve its purposes. Also, they have stated that identification of the individual via the organization occurs when individual values of people are consistent with those of the organization and the individual can internalize organizational values. Undoubtedly, he/she will feel a sense of pride in identification via the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In another study it was determined that size of the organization and supervision were unrelated to commitment but formality, job attachment, and concentration were related to commitment.

Finally, job experiences occur during the individual's work life in the organization. They are regarded as one of the major forces in the process of socialization or effectiveness of employees and are effective on employees' mental attachment to the organization. The employees' perception about positive attitudes of colleagues has influence in their commitment to the company (Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006).

Results of Lee's (2000) study revealed that support of senior managers and leadership along with open communications is effective on employees' affective commitment towards performance and productivity. Also, Kowalski (2007) believed that effective leaders who create positive supportive environments enhance job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational commitment (Nazem & Ghaed mohammadi, 2009, p. 18).

2.3. Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory shows that the exchange relationship between two parties is often beyond economic exchange and includes social exchanges too. The conducted studies illustrate that the manager and employee exchange non individual resources like money as well as social-affective resources such as confirmation, respect, cognition, support, and power (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001). In comparison with other dimensions of commitment, affective commitment predicts organizational behaviors more precisely. According to the above theory, when expectations of employees to supply individual needs are satisfied, they will have higher affective commitment towards the organization (Haar & Spell, 2004). This social exchange is based on a "psychological contract" between the manager and employee. These psychological contracts play an important role in determining organizational behaviors. Giving reward to employees is an important factor to reinforce psychological contracts among the employees and management (Malhotra et al., 2007).

According to social exchange theory, when an organization rewards its employees, they will compensate via developing their affective commitment. Also when employees and managers make good relations at the workplace, not only those involved in these relations but also the organization are benefited (Cole et al., 2002). Advantages of such relations for employees are that if manager-beneficiary relations are effective, employees will have access to more information, resources, affective support, and trust and thus, workplace problems are eliminated more efficiently and effectively. If employees are effective, productivity of the organization is increased which creates an advantage for the organization. According to social exchange theory, because the resources which are inserted by people in their social relations are rarely equal, the output of each specific exchange depends on relative power of the participants in the exchange. Indeed, power is a mechanism that can explain relations among the participants. Based on social exchange theory, it can be stated that employees' affective commitment is related to their perceptions of manager's behavior. For instance, Wickramasinghe and Wickramasinghe (2012) found out that perceived organizational support increases affective commitment and continuous commitment of employees significantly. Van Vuuren et al. (2007) explored direct and indirect relations between manager's communications and affective commitment of the organization and found that the manager's communications can reinforce employees' affective commitment by creating a clear view of important values, the purposes that are going to be realized, and effectiveness of the organization in the past.

3. Conceptual model of the study

Theoretical framework of this study includes theoretical principles and the research studies adopted from scholars and theoreticians of management science. The independent variable of managerial power and its dimensions were adopted from French and Raven's (2000) study and the dependent variable of affective commitment was adopted from Allen and Meyer's (1997) study. Thus, the conceptual model of the study (Figure *3.1*) that shows the relationship between managerial power and affective commitment was proposed and then the hypotheses were formulated.
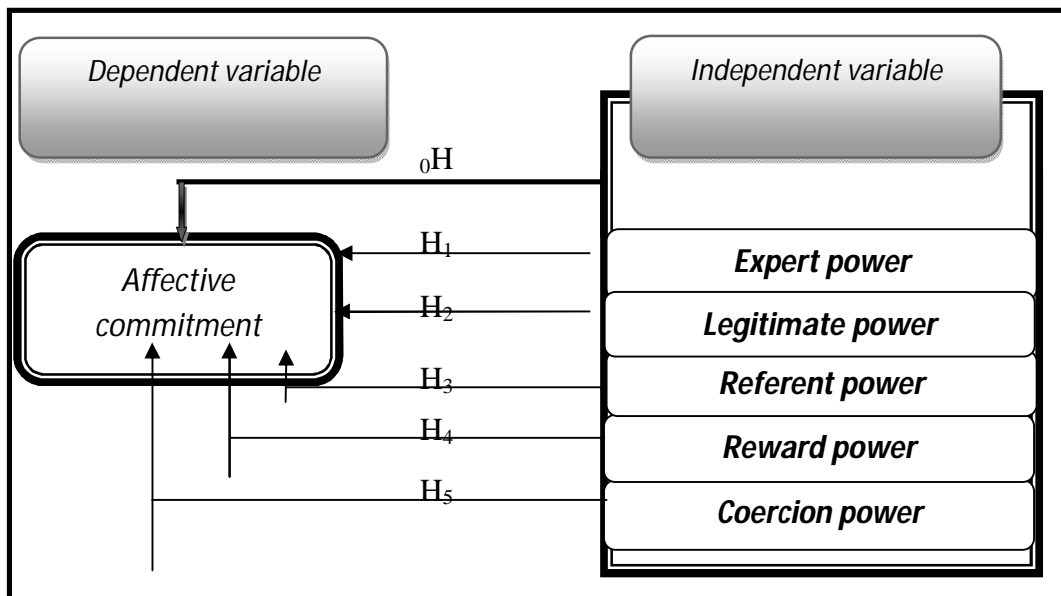
Figure 3.1 Conceptual model adopted from French and Raven (2000) and Allen and Meyer's studies (1997)

3.1. Research hypotheses

According to theoretical principles and the research background on managerial power and affective commitment, the hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

3.1.1. Main hypothesis

The manager's power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

3.1.2. Secondary hypotheses

Secondary hypothesis *1*: The manager's expert power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

Secondary hypothesis *2*: The manager's referent power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

Secondary hypothesis *3*: The manager's reward power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

Secondary hypothesis *4*: The manager's legitimate power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

Secondary hypothesis *5*: The manager's coercive power is effective on affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province.

4. Methodology

This study is applicable from the objective aspect and descriptive-field from methodological aspect. The required data were collected from line and staff personnel of the Social Security Organization of Fars Province. Respondents were selected among the employees who had worked with their direct manager for at least ten months and knew him/her. To estimate the sample size, first a pilot study was conducted on *30* employees. The sample size at error level *5%* and precision *0.5* was estimated equal to *185*. A researcher self-made questionnaire was employed to collect the required information which was based on seven-option Likert scale (*1*= totally agree, *7*= totally disagree) and its validity was confirmed by five specialists of organizational behavior. The reliability was obtained equal to *0.89* via Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the help of Amos software. This value shows that the questionnaire has high reliability.

The questionnaire included *20* questions among which *15* questions were related to manager's power and its dimensions and *5* questions were related to affective commitment. Convenience sampling was used to distribute the questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed through Amos*19* and EQS*6.1* software. The statistical tests included Pearson correlation test to determine correlation between the independent variable of manager's power and its dimensions with the dependent variable of organizational commitment; item analysis to determine whether or not each group of questions measures a unit latent variable; and factorial analysis to determine the effect of different dimensions of manager's power on employees' affective commitment. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics methods were used for data analysis.

5. Research findings

In this section, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics are explored.

5.1. Descriptive statistics

The indexes of descriptive statistics for variables of management power and employees' commitment are illustrated in Table *5.1*.

Table *5.1*: Central and dispersion indexes of the research variables

Variables	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Manager's power	5.51	5.5	0.45
Expert power	5.34	5	0.60
Legitimate power	5.57	6	0.69
Referent power	6.07	6	0.86
Reward power	5.69	6	0.62
Coercive power	4.91	5	0.93
Affective commitment	5.5	6	0.72

Given Table *5.1*, the results indicate that most respondents believe that the component of manager's referent power is at a desirable status in their organization and coercive power has the lowest value.

5.2. Inferential statistics

In order to explore normality assumption of the variables under study, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. The results are represented in Table *5.2*.

Table *5.2*: Results of normality test of data on management power and affective commitment

Variable	*Z*	*Significance level*
Affective commitment	*0.32*	*0.01*
Manager's power	*0.209*	*0.01*
Expert power	*0.39*	*0.01*
Legitimate power	*0.28*	*0.01*
Referent power	*0.23*	*0.01*
Reward power	*0.26*	*0.01*
Coercive power	*0.27*	*0.01*

Considering Table *5.2*, because the significance level of variables is more than *0.01*, all the variables have normal distribution. In this stage, simultaneous effect of independent variables on the dependent variable is examined with the help of item analysis, path analysis and the indexes under study, P-value test, and other fit indices of the model. This study explored which variable has the highest effect. Item analysis was used to determine the relationship of each one of the five factors (latent variable) in Figure *1*. The results are shown in Table *5.3*.

Table *5.3*: Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the questionnaire

Factor	Manager's Power	Expert power	Legitimate power	Referent power	Reward power	Coercive power	Affective commitment
Cronbach's alpha coefficient	0.85	0.83	0.84	0.92	0.81	0.93	0.91

As it is observed in Table *5.3*, Cronbach's alpha coefficients are shown for each dimension of the questionnaire via item analysis. Given the obtained coefficients, it can be concluded that the questions related to each questionnaire component examine a unit variable. In order to explore the relationship between manager's power and its dimensions with affective commitment, Pearson correlation test was employed. The results are represented in Table *5.4*.

Table *5.4*: Results of Pearson correlation test between manager's power and affective commitment

Factor	Manager's Power	Expert power	Legitimate power	Referent power	Reward power	Coercive power	Number	Significance level
Affective commitment	0.749	0.555	0.654	0.693	0.461	0.360	185	0.000

Given the value of the test statistic and the obtained significance level in Table *5.4*, the results show that there is correlation between manager's power and its dimensions with employees' affective commitment. The calculated Pearson correlation coefficient between manager's power and employees' affective commitment is equal to *0.749* and this relationship is positive, direct and significant at the significance level *99%*. Therefore, employees' affective commitment will be enhanced when the manager's power is increased. Similarly, the lowest correlation is related to coercive power (*0.360*).

The research model is shown in Figure *2* based on structural equation modeling using EQS*6.1* software. As it is observed in the figure, reward power (*0.83*) has the highest effect and coercive power (*0.21*) has the lowest effect. The effect degree of expert power is equal to *0.36*, legitimate power is equal to *0.54* and referent power is equal to *0.81*. Managerial power is effective on employees' affective commitment equal to *0.742*.
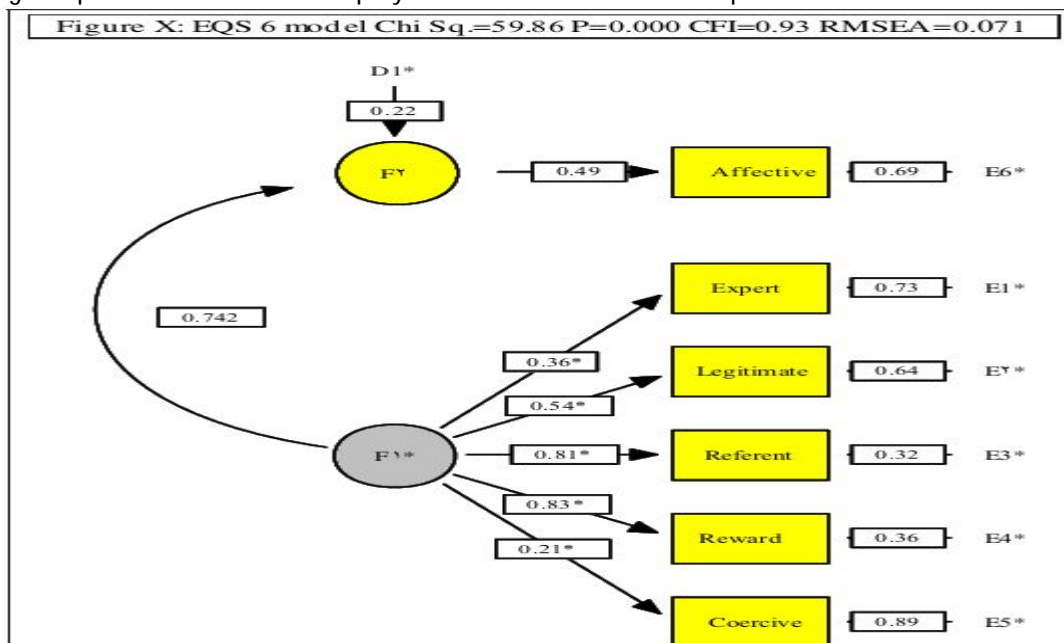

Figure *2*: Structural equation modeling (significance coefficients and confirmatory factor loadings)

Goodness of fit indices was examined to explore suitability of structural equation modeling using Amos19 software. Considering Table *5.5*, chi-square index confirms the model's goodness at the significance level *0.000*. Also X^2/df index was equal to *2.44* and because it was in the range (*1*, *3*) the efficiency of the model was confirmed. The obtained values for CFI, GFI, NFI and IFI indexes confirmed efficiency of the model because they were in the range (*0*, *1*). Given that the obtained values are close to *1*, this model has an acceptable goodness with reality. RMSEA index value is equal to *0.071* which indicates the model has high efficiency. It is noteworthy that the model is more efficient when RMSEA is around *0.05*.

Table *5.5*: Indexes and size of structural equation modeling

RMSEA	IFI	NFI	GFI	CFI	X2/d.f.	Chi-square
0.071	0.98	0.97	0.94	0.98	2.44	59.86

6. Conclusion and suggestions

The major aim of this study was to explore the relationship between dimensions of managerial power and affective commitment of employees in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province. It tried to create a better understanding of affective commitment in employee-manager relations via social exchange theory and thus fill the existing research gap as much as possible. The present study employed French and Raven's managerial power dimensions (2000) to explain the process of affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1997) in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province. Considering the obtained mean values from participants' responses, a desirable status was observed with regard to managers' power and employees' affective commitment in the Social Security Organization of Fars Province. In the same vein, referent power and coercive power had the highest and the lowest correlation with employees' affective commitment, respectively. Moreover, managerial power and its dimensions (expert power, legitimate power, referent power, reward power, and coercive power) have been effective on employees' affective commitment, but the highest and the lowest effects were obtained between reward power and affective commitment as well as coercive power and affective commitment, respectively. All research hypotheses were confirmed.

Given the main hypothesis, the results indicated that successful managers do not experience socialization procedures based on mistrust, caution, and keeping away from beneficiaries because these characteristics prevent from creating trust in people with whom they deal with. Therefore, trust is learnable that is created in social experience and built in social interaction. Managers can improve employees' affective commitment by proper and suitable use of their power. Hence, it is essential that managers pay more attention to understanding their beneficiaries and their needs, trying to enhance employees' affective commitment, and improving their motivation through their power to achieve the purposes of the organization. If a manager uses each dimension of power at a suitable time and situation, employees' attitude towards him/her will be improved and the intellectuality level in manager-employee relations is enhanced.

With regard to secondary hypothesis 1, it can be stated that in the present age, a manager is the one who has to know political science, social insight, and its priorities besides technical specialties. Indeed, a successful manager has to evaluate and valuate the purposes of the organization beside others' benefits and total policies of the society and make decision. Thus, considering that manager's specialty is one of the most important sources of effectiveness in the current technology world and specialization of affairs and people's dependence on high specialty and skill, managers have to consider this issue and enhance their skill and specialty to increase their expert power.

With regard to secondary hypothesis *2*, it can be stated that continuous use of legitimate power will be led to employees' discouragement, indifference, and finally discredit of this power from employees' viewpoint and if it is not used with expert power, human resources will be wasted. Moreover, relying just on this kind of power results in employees' noncompliance and thus dissatisfaction (Moshabaki, 2007). Hence, employees obey the manager's orders due to legitimate power that is based on the individual's status in organizational hierarchy but if managers use legitimate power suitably and logically and when they have high expert power, exploiting their specialty and skill can improve use of this legal power and inspires the sense of affective commitment in employees.

Given the secondary hypothesis *3*, referent power of the manager can be due to his/her perceptions of having higher knowledge about beneficiaries. When a manager shares his/her knowledge or skills with employees, they will achieve a similar knowledge base or skill.

As the knowledge or skills of employees are developed at an equal level with the manager, employees' affective commitment and thus, effectiveness of the organization are reinforced over time. Managers should know that referent power is highly affected by trust. Therefore, they should try to create trust in their relations with employees in order to strengthen their affective commitment. The concept of employees' empowerment is based on power. Studies show that empowerment has a positive effect on employees' affective commitment. Developing the referent power requires a considerable time and may not have the essential effectiveness under conditions where employees' turnover occurs rapidly.

Given secondary hypothesis *4*, it can be stated that if managers can enjoy the reward power desirably, employees will be directed towards proper doing of tasks, increasing of productivity and attachment to the organization and a more effective performance will be observed. Based on social exchange theory, reward power has the highest effect on employees' affective commitment. When reward power is used flexibly, it can be regarded as a strong stimulant. However, when managers rely on reward excessively, the system can have a reverse result. Therefore, reward power should not be restricted to tangible and money rewards; rather managers can use different intangible benefits as reward in order to create commitment in employees. It is, thus, necessary for managers to enhance employees' motivation by offering internal and external rewards and providing the ground for higher affective commitment of employees towards the organization.

Given secondary hypothesis *5*, the results reveal that coercive power has the lowest effect on employees' affective commitment. Managers use coercive power and punishment as the last stage and do not have much tendency to use this kind of power. They believe that using this kind of power does not have useful effects for them (Luthans, 1995). Managers have to consider that coercive power usually leads to short-term obedience, but it creates inefficient behavior in the long-term. Coercion decreases employees' job satisfaction, leads to lack of commitment, and employees leaving the organization. Use of coercive power will create insecure environment, fear, reduction of productivity and creativity. In fact, manager's coercive power is to punish and threaten employees or even to use fear tactics. This was confirmed in the current study, as well. Therefore, if an organization wants to benefit from advantages of employees' affective commitment such as productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency, he/she has to use all kinds of power given the existing conditions and the status dominant in the organization.

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