Effects of cynicism on empowerment in organizations

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Abstract

Organizations are obliged to change fast, and even to be the ones that initiate change in order to survive in this ever-evolving and improving global world. Employee empowerment is considered one of the newest and main weapons against national and international threats towards an organization's survival, and it provides improved alternative ways to reach organizational goals, accomplishing tasks, and providing better services to customers. Organizations should place an importance on this strong competitive tool and utilize the qualities of employee empowerment.

Organizational cynicism can result in a decrease in positive attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. It can also result in an increase of negative tendencies such as intentions to quit the job, and other counterproductive behaviors. Therefore, organizational cynicism can create an obstacle for employee empowerment.

This study examines the relationships between affective and behavioral sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, and the meaning of employee empowerment and autonomy sub-dimensions in a branch of a bank. According to the results, meaningful and negative relationship was determined between affective cynicism and meaning sub-dimension, and behavioral cynicism and autonomy sub-dimension.

Keywords: Organizational cynicism; affective cynicism; behavioral cynicism; employee empowerment.

1. Introduction

The concept of cynicism, rooted in Ancient Greek, was originated from the word "Kynosarges" which was the name of the gymnasium where the school of Cynics was close to Athens. As the owner of this school, Antisthenes, was a student of Sokrates, the Cynic School is considered Socratic. They assert that individuals can reach happiness only by virtue and virtuous behaviors, and can live this happiness by rejecting material income, values such as family, religion, etc. This is the point where Diogenes from Sinop comes in the picture as the first defender of cynicism. It is said that Diogenes aimed to live without being bound to any authority and lived in a barrel to isolate himself from societal necessities in Athens. With this, he turned the philosophy of Cynic into action (Shea, 2013:4).

The person who considers people as people who are only concerned with their own benefits is called a "cynic," and the thought process behind this view is called "cynicism". Andersson and Bateman (1997) stated that all humans act only according to their benefits and therefore, they are self-interested; and they defined people with this thinking as 'cynics'. Eisinger (2000) defines a cynical individual as an individual who believes that personal benefits are the best motivational tool.

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Definitions that gave positive meanings to cynicism are done as a result of philosophical approaches. Brandes (1997) approached cynicism philosophically and considered cynicism a personality trait. Cook and Medley (1954) approached cynicism psychologically and explained it with two dimensions; hostility and hypocrisy.

The most fundamental study on cynicism is "Prince", the work of a political scientist, Machiavelli, where he gives advice to an Italian Prince. He inclined to cynicism by saying "the ends justfiy the means." From this perspective, Machiavellism which defends the right of individuals' lies to protect their existing situations, is considered cynical (Abraham, 2004:3).

It is possible to see cynicism in "Wealth of Nations" by Adam Smith who proposes that people are after increasing their own benefits (invisible hand), and in "Capital" by Karl Marx where the proletariat is exploited by the middle-class (bourgeois) and a world where greedy employers exist (Kılıç, 2011: 5).

Cynical employees are employees that are constantly lacking self-confidence, that are incompatible with their colleagues, that look down on their colleagues' work, and that have negative thoughts on the organization (Akman, 2013:13). Cynical organizations are organizations that execute misleading practices based more on expolitation, that establish one-way communication, that may have hypocritical work policies against employees, and where selfish values can be seen tangibly (Kalağan, 2009: 39). There are several definitions of organizational cynicism in literature. According to Evans, Goodman, and Davis (2011), organizational cynicism is negative attitudes and judgments developed by employees towards their own organization, its structure, and function. Organizational cynicism is defined as resistance against supervisory control by Bommer, Rich, and Rubin (2005), while it is a defense mechanism developed by employees against their negative attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors developed for the organization according to Naus, Iterson, and Roe (2007). Kannan-Narasimhan and Lawrence (2012) state that organizational cynicism is disappointment, hopelessness, and lack of faith in the organization. According to Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003), organizational cynicism emerges as a result of employees thinking that their organizations are not fair and honest.

1.1. Dımensıons of Organızatıonal Cynıcısm

Organizational cynicism in individuals starts with the development of certain beliefs, and continues with these beliefs turning first into emotions, and then to behaviors against the organization and other individuals in the organization. Organizational cynicism is examined in three dimensions that are; cognitive (faith), affective (emotions), and behavioral (behavior) dimensions.

Cognitive dimension / Belief: Belief exists in societal norms and shapes socio-cultural and moral structure of society (Morgaan, 2005:263). The first dimension that is cognitive dimension which is the belief that emerges with negative emotions such as anger, condescension, and condemnation that the organization is not honest. Therefore, cynics believe that organizational practices are not fair, honest, and sincere, and they don't trust their organizations (Brandes and Das, 2006:237).

Affective Dimension / Emotion: Cynical individuals are people that have emotions towards their organizations in addition to their beliefs (Dean et al., 1998:346). Affective dimension as the second dimension is related to emotional reactions developed in an individual against the organization. This dimension includes strong emotional reactions such as disrespectfulness, distress, embarrasment, anger, and violence (Abraham, 2000:269).

Behavioral Dimension / Behavior: Behavioral dimension is related to the negative beliefs developed by individuals in the cognitive dimension that turn into actions and tendencies against the organization (Helvacı, 2010: 1485). An employee in this dimension shows behaviors such as critical approaches, complaints, underestimation, etc. (Özgener, 2008: 56).

1.2. Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment which is considered one of the newest and main weapons against national and international threats that might threaten an organization's survival (Menon, 2001: 413) offers improved alternatives to employees to do their jobs, to provide better customer services, and

reaching organizational goals (Boone and Kurtz, 2013:286). Employee empowerment should be well known and practiced in the global market where competition is strong (Yıldırım ve Karabey, 2015: 71).

Employee empowerment can be seen as one of the fundamental ways of enabling management. Managers encourage employees and assign their authority and responsibilities in order to be able to make decisions about their work (Boone and Kurtz, 2013:86). Although there are mutual qualities in many definitions of assigning authority and responsibility to subordinates, there is not one unified definition as in other social concepts, and therefore, different definitions emerged as a result.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) define employee empowerment as identifying elements that affect weaknesses in organizations and as the process of helping employees gain confidence by eliminating these elements. According to Gandz (1990), employee empowerment in classical management concept is allowing decision making to be implemented in human resources as managerial privileges. Brymer (1991), explained employee empowerment as decentralizing decision making process in an organization and providing more appreciation and approval to employees.

Increase of competitive qualities of organizations can be possible by adapting a decentralised structure. Additionally, giving the right of decision making to employees would lead employees towards organizational goals.

According to researchers, employee empowerment provides various advantages to the organization that are explained below.

Service that is most appropriate for customer satisfaction would be achieved by employee empowerment. Being able to respond to customer needs during service distribution, being able to respond to customers who are not satisfied due to problems emerging from services, and being able to establish a relationship that is warm and willing would be achieved by employee empowerment (Bowen and Lawler, 1992:33).

As increase in staff efficiency would lead employees to take responsibilities themselves, the services provided would be high quality (Baltaş, 2001: 145). There are several examples that prove that employee empowerment increases employee loyalty to the organization (Khan, 1997:46). An empowered employee would be focusing his/her efforts on the task at hand, he would be an active problem solver. This helps empowered employee to gain flexibility, and it increases efficiency by alternative methods at key points (Curtis et al., 1997:244).

It helps managers to gain flexibility. Managers will be able to focus on strategic issues by reducing managerial work through transfering their authorities to employees who had improved themselves, are talented and empowered in a safe and transparent environment (Khan, 1997:46). Thus, managers will concentrate on more important organizational issues in terms of their energy and time, and improve efficiency.

Employee empowerment turns organizations into learning organizations. In order to make the right decisions in employee empowerment, there will be continuous training and employees will learn from their decisions. Sharing of information that is learned makes the organization a learning organization (Dogan, 2006: 106).

An environment where there is less dysfunctional conflict, and more trust and communication forms. Teams formed in an informed and efficient way would prevent dysfunctional conflicts that may occur within the organization, improve communication, and create a trusted environment (Khan, 1997:46).

Employee loyalty will increase. Studies show that employee empowerment increases employees' loyalty to the organization (Dogan, 2006:106).

Monotony is decreased in empowered employees. As mentioned in job enrichment, employee empowerment will significantly reduce monotony by providing employees the right to choose from several alternatives.

Empowered employees will demonstrate their innovativeness and creativity. Empowered employees will be more innovative and creative when making a choice, making a decision,

consulting or giving their opinions as they will not be afraid. Training and sharing of information will have a major role in this influence. Also, shared responsibility is another encouraging factor.

Goal congruence will be established with empowered employees. These employees will embrace the organization's vision and will make more efforts to reach goals due to the training provided and shared information.

Empowerment is not a practice that forces people to do things. Organizational qualities and attitudes of managers alone will not ensure employees act within employee empowerment attitude (Sahin, 2007:22). In other words, empowerment plays an important role in achieving personal and organizational success. Choosing to act freely within an organization's structure and being able to work as a team with others is a personal decision made on the path to reach goals (Duvall, 1999:207).

2. Purpose

Literature shows that organizational cynicism has several negative effects on organizations. Some of these negative effects include a decrease in loyalty, getting estranged and numb towards the job, developing intentions of quitting, sabotage, theft, mistrust towards the organization, lack of motivation (Kalagan, 2009:82). Organizational cynicism has psychological and physiological results in terms of individuals. These include, neurosis, emotional disorders, depression, insomnia, emotional burnout and disappointment. Additionally, organizational cynicism afffects individuals socio-psychologically as well. Emotional reactions such as anger, anxiety, and frustration are seen in employees as a result of organizational cynicism (Mirvis & Kanter: 1989). Due tho these reasons, organizational cynicism is thought to create an obstacle for psychological employee empowerment.

In light of this information, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between organizational cynicism and employee empowerment. Affective, cognitive, and behavioral sub-dimensions of cynicism is measured to determine how they affect employee empowerment.

3. Hypotheses and Model Of The Study

Hypotheses below are developed according to literature information shared previously:

H1: Affective cynicism affects employee empowerment negatively.

H_{1a}: Affective cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{1b}: Affective cynicism affects the efficiency sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{1c}: Affective cynicism affects the autonomy sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{1d}: Affective cynicism affects the effect sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_2: Cognitive cynicism affects employee empowerment negatively.

H_{2a}: Cognitive cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{2b}: Cognitive cynicism affects the efficiency sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{2c}: Cognitive cynicism affects the autonomy sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{2d}: Cognitive cynicism affects the effect sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_3: Behavioral cynicism affects employee empowerment negatively.

H_{3a}: Behavioral cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H_{3b}: Behavioral cynicism affects the efficiency sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H₃c: Behavioral cynicism affects the autonomy sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

H₃d: Behavioral cynicism affects the effect sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively.

The study model representing the relationships suggested in the hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Study Model
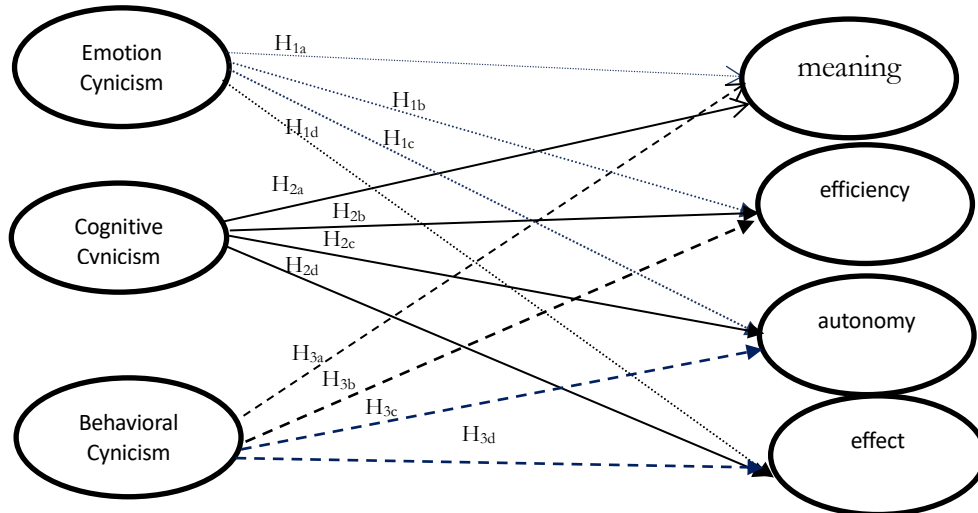
4. Methodology

4.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The population of this study consists of employees of a bank in Erzurum that has 135 employees. The sample size is determined to be 100 by using the sample size calculation table with 95% confidence level and 5% error margin (Bartlett et al., 2001:48). Random sampling is used and 115 employees were given the surveys with the consideration of possible response mistakes. 108 of the distributed forms were collected within 5 days. Surveys that had missing information and outliers were not included in the analysis. As a result, analysis was performed on the data collected from 101 surveys.

4.2. Measuring Tool

Surveys prepared in question format were chosen from scales that were frequently used in previous studies, are validated and reliable in different cultural environments. The survey used in this study is adapted from the work of Dean et al., (1998). It measures the level of organizational cynicism and consists of 13 items. Employee empowerment survey was developed by Spreitzer (1995). The scales are 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. All the surveys were first translated from English to Turkish by the researchers, and then adapted to Turkish to eliminate the problems that might occur due to cultural differences. After the translation to Turkish, the items were translated to English and these reverse-translations were examined by language experts in terms of loss of meaning or change in meanings due to cultural interpretation.

Reliability analysis was performed for the question statements and cronbach alpha was found to be 0.86 for organizational cynicism and 0.83 for employee empowerment.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to present the structural validity of scales used and the results of analysis are reported in Table 1 in the next section. According to the results of confirmatory factor analysis, affective and behavioral sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism, and the meaning and autonomy sub-dimensions in employee empowerment are consistent. Therefore, the hypotheses related to the cognitive sub-dimension of organizational cynicism and

the efficiency and effect sub-dimensions of employee empowerment were not tested. Additionally, explanatory factor analysis was performed on the items before the confirmatory factor analysis. The variance for cynicism was found to be 80.685 and 79.087 for employee empowerment in the related items, and the factor loads were found to be over 0.70.

4.3. Analysis and Findings

First, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the data gathered from the survey in LISREL 8.7 to determine the sub-dimension of the variables. Then, regression analysis was performed in SPSS 21 and the results of hypotheses tests were presented.

Skewness values were examined before the confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the data was appropriate for the normal distribution. According to these values, all the variables except the reciprocation wariness variable were appropriate for the normal distribution. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed by the maximum likelihood test for variables appropriate for normal distribution and the weighted least squares test for response variable. The results of confirmatory factor analysis and the fit index acceptance levels are presented in Table 1a and Table 1b, respectively.

Table 1a: Fit index obtained by confirmatory factor analysis

Variable	χ^2	(sd)	χ^2/sd	Values CFI	NFI	NNFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Organizational Cynicism	11,10	8	1,38	0,99	0,97	0,98	0,91	0,062
Employee Empowerment	2,58	8	0,32	1,00	0,99	0,99	0,98	0,040

Table 1b: Acceptance Values for Fit Index

Abbr.	Meaning	Acceptance Value
χ^2	Chi-square	-
Sd	Degrees of freedom	-
χ^2/sd	Chi-square/ degrees of freedom	≤2[a], ≤5[b] (a: excellent fit b: good fit)
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	0,05 < (tolerence 0,08)
CFI	Comparative fit index	0,90≤
NFI	Normed fit index	0,90≤
NNFI	Nonnormed fit index	0,90≤
AGFI	Adjusted goodness of fit index	0,90≤

Resource: Meydan ve Şeşen, 2011: 37.

According to Table 1a, it is found that the variables show good fit according to the results of confirmatory factor analysis. Table 2 shows the summary of results regarding model concepts of the study:

Table 2: *Brief Results Regarding to the Concepts in theModel*

Concept in the Model	Measure items	Standard values	t value
Affective Cynicism (DUYS)	DUYS1	0,86	10,64
	DUYS2	0,98	13,23
	DUYS4	0,91	11,64
Behavioral Cynicism (DAVS)	DAVS1	0,73	7,45
	DAVS3	0,74	7,52
	DAVS4	0,77	7,91
Psychological employee empowerment Meaning (PGA)	PGA1	0,85	10,50
	PGA2	0,92	11,78
	PGA3	0,93	11,94
Psychological employee empowerment Autonomy (PGO)	PGO1	0,80	8,69
	PGO2	0,97	11,12
	PGO3	0,51	5,25

*According to the factor analysis performed on the 12-item organizational cynicism scale, only affective and behavioral sub-scale showed good fit in the confirmatory factor analysis. Therefore, cognitive cynicism variable was not included in the study. Also, meaning and autonomy sub-dimensions of the 13-item employee empowerment scale showed good fit. Thus, efficiency and effect sub-dimensions were not included in the study.

Statistical values, correlation coefficients of variables, and Cronbach alpha values are presented in table 3:

Tablo 4: Descriptive statistics of variables, correlation coefficients, and Cronbach Alpha Values

Variable	Mean	St.Dev.	1	2	3	4
1-CYNICISM AFF.	4,07	0,89	1			
2-CYNICISM BEH.	3,53	0,94	,340[**]	1		
3-PG MEANING	1,52	0,69	-,297**	-,265**	1	
4-PG AUTONOMY	2,12	0,89	-,140	-,286**	,458[**]	1

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

Table 4 shows that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between affective cynicism and behavioral cynicism (r=.340, p<0.01). There is a negative and meaningful relationship between the meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment and affective and behavioral cynicism (r= -.297, r= -.265, p<0.01). Additionally, there is a negative and meaningful relationship between the autonomy sub-dimension of employee empowerment and behavioral cynicism (r= -.286, p<0.01). However, there is no meaningful relationship found between the autonomy sub-dimension of employee empowerment and affective cynicism. Also, there is a positive and meaningful relationship between the meaning and autonomy sub-dimensions of employee empowerment (r=.458, p<0.01).

Table 5: The relationship between the sub-dimensions of organizational cynicism and the meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable					
	Affective Cynicism			Behavioral Cynicism		
	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	p
Employee Empowerment (EE) MEANING	-,234	-2,318	0,02*	-,186	-1,844	0,05*
R²	,088			,119		
D.R²	,079			,101		
F	9,574			6,604		

* p< 0,05   ** < 0,01

The meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment is accepted as the dependent variable and the affective and behavioral cynicism were accepted as independent variables in the regression analysis. According to the regression analysis results, around 9% ($R2$=.088) of total variance of meaning sub-dimension is explained by affective cynicism and 12% ($R2$=.119) by behavioral cynicism (table 5). It is seen in the meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment that experience of affective cynicism of individuals affects the meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment negatively and meaningfully. Also, there is a meaningful and negative relationship between behavioral cynicism and the meaning sub-dimension.

The data presented in table 5 and the F values show the explanatory strength of the model. According to the data in the correlation and regression analyses, H1a "affective cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively" is accepted and H3a "behavioral cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively" is accepted.

Table 6: Relationship between organizational cynicism sub-dimensions and the autonomy sub-dimension of employee empowerment

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable					
	Affective Cynicism			Behavioral Cynicism		
	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	p
EE AUTONOMY	-,049	-,476	0,06	-,269	-2,616	0,02**
R²	,020			,010		
D.R²	,084			,065		
F	1,988			4,473		

* p< 0,05   ** < 0,01

According to the regression analysis results, where autonomy sub-dimension of employee empowerment is accepted as dependent variable and the affective and behavioral cynicism are accepted as independent variables, around 2% ($R2$= .020)of the total variance of meaning sub-dimension is explained by affective cynicism and 1% ($R2$= .010) is explained by behavioral cynicism (Table 6). The affective cynicism experiences of individuals aligned with autonomy of employee empowerment practices do not affect the autonomy sub-dimension meaningfully. However, there is a meaningful relationship between behavioral cynicism and the autonomy dimension.

The data in table 6 and the F values show the explanatory strength of the model. According to the table 4 correlation analysis and table 6 regression analysis, H1C "Affective cynicism affects the autonomy sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively" is rejected and H3C "behavioral cynicism affects the autonomy sub-dimension of psychological employee empowerment negatively" is accepted.

5. Results and Suggestions

The results of correlation and regression analyses performed on 101 employees in a bank, show that the affective sub-dimension of organizational cynicism affects the meaning sub-dimension of employee empowerment negatively and meaningfully (Table 5). However, there is no meaningful relationship related to affective cynicism and the autonomy sub-dimension of employee empowerment (Table 6).

In the behavioral sub-dimension of organizational cynicism, cynicism reflected on behaviors affect both the meaning and autonomy sub-dimensions of employee empowerment meaningfully and negatively (Table 5 and 6). The cognitive sub-dimension of organizational cynicism and efficiency and effect sub-dimensions of employee empowerment couldn't be tested because they did not show good fit.

Although the relationships between cynicism and employee empowerment are new research topics, there are several different results seen in limited empirical studies. For instance, Polat, Meydan, & Tokmak (2010) found a negative relationship between employee empowerment and cynicism in a study on organizational identification and organizational cynicism. Avey et al. (2008) found a negative relationship between employee empowerment and cynicism. According to the data obtained from studies, the sub-dimensions of cynicism and employee empowerment are not studied in detail as in our study. However, the total relationship results include similar negative relationships.

The results showed that the level of cynicism is significantly high while employee empowerment level is significantly low in the bank that we conducted the study (Affective cynicism: 4.07, Behavioral cynicism: 3.53, employee empowerment meaning: 1.52, employee empowerment autonomy: 2.12). Also, the high level of cynicism affect employee empowerment negatively. It can be said that individuals who experience cynicism towards their organizations at the affective level don't find their jobs meaningful. However, it is observed that individuals who experience behavioral cynicism towards their organization don't find their jobs meaningful nor do they use autonomy while performing their jobs.

As a result of organizational cynicism, organizational performance, citizenship practices, morale, motivation and loyalty are affected negatively, and business cycle and absence increase (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Wanous et al., 2000). Cynical behaviors that are very dangerous for organizations, create an obstacle for employee empowerment as well.

The results of this study provide a way for managers to coordinate organizational relationships in the work environment. When employees show cynical behaviors, positive attitude and behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and organizational citizenship may decrease while intentions of quitting job or counter-productive behaviors may increase. Also, it is obvious that managers who want to implement employee empowerment practices in their organizations should reduce the level of cynicism in their organizations to a minimum level. Therefore, it is important for managers to implement practices to handle cynicism in their organizations.

There are some limitations of this study. Only quantitative approach is used in this study. As the perception of cynicism and pscyhological employee empowerment is a concept that is based on the interaction between an employee and the organization, it would be more useful to use qualitative methods in addition to quantitative to examine the concept in more depth. Use of qualitative and quantitative methods together is suggested for future research.

The filed research in this study is performed on employees of only one organization. Thus, the findings can be generalized for this organization. It would be useful to perform future research studies on employees in different fields in order to understand the differences that might occur between different fields in terms of results of cynicism.

The effect of cynicism on employee empowerment is examined as an independent variable. It would be useful to study mediator or determinant effects by adding different variables.

Finally, this study provides a cross-sectional quality. In cross-sectional studies, data are collected only once from a certain sample and analysed. The findings of this study are not suitable for making causal statements. Longitudinal studies are needed to be able to establish a cause and effect relation between variables.

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