

Effective Factors on Psychological Empowerment. Case Study: Service organization

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Abstract. The current research has been conducted to investigate the psychological empowerment factors among employees in the service organization. The research questionnaire has gained from Spreitzer (1996) work about psychological empowerment. Population contains 500 employees in the service organization in Tehran (Iran). Based on the sampling formula, 115 employees have been selected and received research questionnaire. 68 employees have returned completed questionnaires. Data have been analyzed by descriptive statistics, and also Inferential Statistics such as T-test, One-way ANOVA. Results have been shown significant difference in the viewpoints of men and women and employees in different organizational ranks about their psychological empowerment. Finally, research suggestions have been presented in this field.

Keywords: Psychological Empowerment, Service Organization

1. Introduction

Organizations typically embark on change programmes with the aim of achieving critical performance improvement. At the heart of such programmes, we are usually seeking changes in behavior and in the accepted ways of doing things [1]. The need for empowerment is a direct consequence of the attempts by organizations, through de-layering and right-sizing, to increase efficiency, effectiveness and meet the needs of increased competition. Empowerment is a process, and it can challenge the way things are done [2]. As service industries become more competitive, the importance of empowerment in service industries is increasingly recognized as a key to creating the more and more demanding customers [3]. Leaders and managers attempting to enhance the empowerment levels of the people in their organization focus on the following areas: improving the knowledge, competence, and expertise of the organizational members [4]. Empowerment theory, research and intervention link individual well-being with the larger social and political environment [5]. In fact, empowerment is an on-going process, taking place in a dynamic environment, involving many elements that operate at different levels of analysis [6]. There are two aspects of empowerment we must address to understand the concept fully. The first is personal empowerment. The second dimension of empowerment has to do with the way in which we work with others to nurture their sense of self-esteem, autonomy and growth [7]. The buzzword “empowerment” has become a strategic concern for managers, human resource professionals and consultants alike [8]. “Total quality management” also offer ways in which empowerment of employees can support an organization’s efforts not only in quality improvement, but in empowerment as well. In particular, the plan-do-study-act cycle lies at the heart of the improvement process and represents the key to employee empowerment in that process [9]. With its focus on developing individual potential, while at the same time promoting larger organizational ideals, empowerment offers practical, emotional and ideological appeal [10].

2. Literature Review

The concept of employee participation has taken many different forms, involving through the employee involvement and participative decision-making concepts into the contemporary empowerment perspective [11]. Therefore, empowerment can be viewed as a comprehensive contemporary version of the participation and industrial democracy movement of the 1970s. It is a set of motivational techniques that are designed to improve employee performance through increased levels of employee participation and self determination [12]. One of the theoretical foundations for predictions related to empowerment can be found in the job

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characteristics theory (JCT). JCT suggests that the specific characteristics of an employee's job, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and job feedback form an individual's motivating potential score, which predicts three critical psychological states, experienced meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of results [13]. Employee empowerment is important to the organizational change process because empowerment fulfills the individual's need for a sense of control [14]. Various researchers have looked at the dimensions of empowerment through different lenses. Control of one's own work, autonomy on the job, variations of teamwork, and pay systems that link pay with performance are all called empowerment [15]. Empowerment involves an intrinsic desire to take charge of one's life, rather than a mere transmission of organizational power to individuals through a mechanical process of some sort [16]. The concept of empowerment was introduced by Kanter (1983) as a successor to the older command-and-control approach, in which power in organizations is centralized and in which management directs employees what to do and how to do it [17]. Spreitzer (1992,1997) has focused on psychological empowerment at the workplace, which she defined in terms of sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact [18]. Spreitzer (1995) argued that the four cognitions can be combined to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment where the lack of any one dimension will reduce, the overall extent of empowerment [19]. Spreitzer (1995) views psychological empowerment as a continuous variable, by which individuals perceive themselves as more or less empowered rather than empowered or not empowered [20]. Solomon (1976) and Gutierrez (1988) focused on what are considered powerless or marginalized populations [21]. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) conceptualize empowerment as a set of four task assessments that individuals make as they attempt to interpret their work situation, include: meaning, impact, competence and choice [22]. Consequently, a working definition of psychological empowerment can be proposed as follows: the psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization [23]. Thomas and Tymon (1994), relate cognitions about empowerment to job satisfaction, stress, and work effectiveness; Spreitzer (1996), relates psychological empowerment to organizational variables such as socio-political support and participative climate; and Spreitzer, Kizilos and Nason (1997), also relate psychological empowerment to work satisfaction, stress and effectiveness. In the motivational approach pioneered by Conger and Kanungo (1988), empowerment was conceptualized as psychological enabling. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) extended this approach by viewing power as energy: to empower is to energize. According to these authors empowerment is associated with "changes in cognitive variables, which determine motivation in workers" [24].

3. Research method

The general aim of this research is investigation the psychological empowerment factors among employees in the service organization. Research method was descriptive- analytical. The questionnaire has gained from Spreitzer (1996) work about psychological empowerment. It contains 38 questions and examines psychological empowerment in 13 fields including: Having clarified goals, Modelling, Supporting, Emotional stimulation, Information Provision, Access to resources, Authority delegation, Reward system, Cooperative management, Grouping, Work structure, Performance appraisal, and finally, independency at work. The reliability of this questionnaire was 0.95 in this research. The population contains 500 employees in the service organization in Tehran (Iran). Based on the sampling formula, 115 employees have been selected and received research questionnaire. 68 employees have returned completed questionnaires. In order to analyzing data, descriptive statistics such as Mean, Standard Deviation, and also Inferential Statistics such as T-test, One-way ANOVA have been used.

4. Finding

Question 1: *What are the view points of employees about affecting factors on their Psychological empowerment?* Based on the obtained t-value and the significant level given in table 1 in the .001 alpha ranges, it was specified that employees stood higher than average in *** indicators. However, *** indicators stand at a weaker point.

Table 1: Single variable T-test with the purpose of examining the suitability of employees' empowerment indicators

Indicators	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Having clarified goals	2.093	67	.040	.499	.02	.98
Modelling	-2.727	67	.008	-.661	-1.14	-.18
Supporting	5.024	67	.000	1.294	.78	1.81
Emotional stimulation	14.937	67	.000	3.902	3.38	4.42
Information Provision	-2.018	67	.048	-.487	-.97	-.01
Access to resource	-2.535	67	.014	-.609	-1.09	-.13
Authority delegation	6.203	67	.000	1.569	1.06	2.07
Reward system	-2.980	67	.004	-.770	-1.29	-.25
Cooperative management	.730	67	.468	.191	-.33	.71
Grouping	-1.622	67	.109	-.415	-.93	.10
Work structure	-9.125	67	.000	-2.287	-2.79	-1.79
Performance evaluation	-.192	67	.849	-.049	-.55	.46
Interdependency at work	2.985	67	.004	.793	.26	1.32

Question 2: Is there any significant difference among the view points of employees about affecting factors on their Psychological empowerment? According to table 2, in terms of empowerment indicators, there is significant difference between groups. Based on the pursued test, we observed that the higher the educational level of individuals, the higher their empowerment indicators would be.

Table 2: Results of one-way ANOVA with the purpose of examining employees' empowerment indicator differences based on individual education levels

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Having clarified goals	Between Groups	211.661	3	70.554	158.286	.000
	Within Groups	27.636	62	.446		
	Total	239.297	65			
Modelling	Between Groups	217.230	3	72.410	133.602	.000
	Within Groups	33.603	62	.542		
	Total	250.833	65			
Supporting	Between Groups	250.620	3	83.540	134.453	.000
	Within Groups	38.523	62	.621		
	Total	289.142	65			
Emotional stimulation	Between Groups	253.026	3	84.342	120.332	.000
	Within Groups	43.457	62	.701		
	Total	296.483	65			
Information Provision	Between Groups	228.958	3	76.319	132.739	.000
	Within Groups	35.647	62	.575		
	Total	264.605	65			
Access to resource	Between Groups	222.166	3	74.055	111.781	.000
	Within Groups	41.075	62	.663		
	Total	263.241	65			
Authority delegation	Between Groups	244.587	3	81.529	121.127	.000
	Within Groups	41.731	62	.673		
	Total	286.318	65			
Reward system	Between Groups	258.403	3	86.134	119.677	.000
	Within Groups	44.623	62	.720		
	Total	303.026	65			
Cooperative management	Between Groups	273.902	3	91.301	145.942	.000
	Within Groups	38.787	62	.626		
	Total	312.689	65			
Grouping	Between Groups	261.471	3	87.157	145.862	.000
	Within Groups	37.047	62	.598		
	Total	298.518	65			
Work structure	Between Groups	248.885	3	82.962	138.629	.000
	Within Groups	37.104	62	.598		
	Total	285.989	65			
Performance evaluation	Between Groups	231.726	3	77.242	81.184	.000
	Within Groups	58.990	62	.951		
	Total	290.716	65			
Interdependency at work	Between Groups	270.256	3	90.085	110.689	.000
	Within Groups	50.459	62	.814		
	Total	320.716	65			

Question 3: Is there any significant difference among employees' empowerment based on their demographic characteristics such as gender and Organizational Rank? Based on the data given in table 3, considering obtained t-values for empowerment indicators in .05 alpha, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between men and women employees in terms of empowerment indicators.

Table 3: T-Test results for examining empowerment indicator differences based on gender

Empowerment factors	Leving's testing		T- test				
	Sig	f	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean difference	Standard deviation
Having clarified goals	.002	9.917	11.540	64	.000	3.166	.247
Modelling	.690	.160	14.039	64	.000	3.427	.258
Supporting	.002	10.059	14.558	64	.000	3.712	.244
Emotional stimulation	.000	16.408	14.163	64	.000	3.734	.242
Information Provision	.002	10.463	13.029	64	.000	3.452	.255
Access to resource	.006	8.175	12.905	64	.000	3.435	.240
Authority delegation	.201	1.671	14.246	64	.000	3.675	.264
Reward system	.078	3.209	13.813	64	.000	3.752	.245
Cooperative management	.000	18.504	13.445	64	.000	3.785	.265
Grouping	.000	17.883	12.900	64	.000	3.657	.249
Work structure	.078	3.231	12.528	64	.000	3.550	.266
Performance evaluation	.003	9.549	10.596	64	.000	3.389	.320
Independency at work	.000	54.470	9.443	64	.000	3.403	.360

Table 4: Results of one-way ANOVA for examining employees' empowerment indicator differences based on organizational rank

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Having clarified goals	Between Groups	225.794	14	16.128	25.630	.000
	Within Groups	33.351	53	.629		
	Total	259.146	67			
Modelling	Between Groups	233.453	14	16.675	25.947	.000
	Within Groups	34.061	53	.643		
	Total	267.514	67			
Supporting	Between Groups	275.617	14	19.687	39.575	.000
	Within Groups	26.365	53	.497		
	Total	301.982	67			
Emotional stimulation	Between Groups	273.965	14	19.569	28.042	.000
	Within Groups	36.985	53	.698		
	Total	310.950	67			
Information Provision	Between Groups	218.076	14	15.577	17.559	.000
	Within Groups	47.017	53	.887		
	Total	265.093	67			
Access to resource	Between Groups	222.776	14	15.913	20.842	.000
	Within Groups	40.465	53	.763		
	Total	263.241	67			
Authority delegation	Between Groups	261.262	14	18.662	32.830	.000
	Within Groups	30.127	53	.568		
	Total	291.390	67			
Reward system	Between Groups	252.032	14	18.002	18.273	.000
	Within Groups	52.216	53	.985		
	Total	304.248	67			
Cooperative management	Between Groups	267.229	14	19.088	22.217	.000
	Within Groups	45.536	53	.859		
	Total	312.765	67			
Grouping	Between Groups	245.391	14	17.528	17.370	.000
	Within Groups	53.482	53	1.009		
	Total	298.873	67			
Work Structure	Between Groups	238.780	14	17.056	19.079	.000
	Within Groups	47.378	53	.894		
	Total	286.158	67			
Performance evaluation	Between Groups	208.004	14	14.857	9.312	.000
	Within Groups	84.566	53	1.596		
	Total	292.570	67			
Independency at work	Between Groups	234.611	14	16.758	10.252	.000
	Within Groups	86.635	53	1.635		
	Total	321.246	67			

According to table 4, there was significant difference between groups based on organizational rank. Based on the pursued test results, we observed that the higher the organizational level of employees, the higher their empowerment indicators would be.

5. Conclusion

Empowerment is multi-dimensional, social, and a process. It is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within sociological, psychological, economic, and other dimensions. Empowerment also occurs at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Empowerment, by definition, is a social process, since it occurs in

relationship to others. Empowerment is a process that is similar to a path or journey, one that develops as we work through it. Other aspects of empowerment may vary according to the specific context and people involved, but these remain constant. In addition, one important implication of this definition of empowerment is that the individual and community are fundamentally connected [25]. Hence, reduced empowerment was expected to enhance depression and diminish subjective quality of life [26]. Therefore, Empowerment can help companies keep their best people by giving them better training, more responsibility, and a greater role in determining their firm's destiny [27]. The process of empowerment requires allowing for mistakes, rewarding the risk-takers, avoiding blame, and management giving up control [28]. As it has shown in the research findings, there was no significant difference among the viewpoints of men and women and employees in different organizational ranks about affecting factors on their psychological empowerment. Furthermore, having clarified goals and independency at work, orderly have the most and least effect on the psychological empowerment of employees. So we can consider following suggestions for improving their level of empowerment: (1) Providing strategy and programs for psychological empowerment of employees; (2) Developing the factors of psychological empowerment of employees; (3) Diffusion the empowering culture in organization; (4) Improving the communication channels between employees and managers; (5) Encouraging corporative works.

6. References

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